THE LOST LITERATURE OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

THE LOST LITERATURE OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

BY

R. M. WILSON

Head of Dept. of English Language in the University of Sheffield

PHILOSOPHICAL LIBRARY

NEW YORK

Published 1952 *by the Philosophical Library Inc.*
15 *East 40th Street, New York* 16, *N.Y.*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO

DOROTHY

AND

ANNE

PREFACE

THIS survey of the lost literature of medieval England is an attempt to provide concrete evidence for the general statements often made on the subject. It is hoped that by placing it side by side with the histories of the extant literature a much truer picture of the extent, growth and development of Old and Middle English literature may be gained. Few of the topics or stories mentioned in the following pages have been exhaustively dealt with,—this was inevitable if the study was to be kept within reasonable bounds,—but it is hoped that enough indications are given to allow any interested reader to carry out further investigations for himself.

It must be admitted that the title is more concise than correct. At the best such a study could deal only with the literature which has left some trace, and it is obvious enough that much must have disappeared and left behind no indication whatever of its former existence. Moreover, even within these inevitable limits, no claim can be made for any comprehensiveness of treatment. Such a title should include chapters on Anglo-French and Anglo-Latin literature,—and material for interesting chapters on them is available,—but the two literatures have been intentionally omitted. A few catalogues of monastic libraries, and some collections of medieval wills, although in print, have not been available to me. Also, it is certain that many medieval wills still remain unpublished as well as lists of books and perhaps some catalogues of monastic libraries. Nevertheless, if we may judge from the numerous documents of this type which have been examined,

it is unlikely that those which have not been seen would contain much of interest. On the other hand, it is certain that a close scrutiny of the medieval Latin and vernacular chronicles would bring to light many other stories current during the Old and Middle English periods. This statement refers more particularly to the chapter on historical narrative and to the section on the Matter of England. Here it has seemed wiser to limit the selection of the stories to those for which the available evidence suggests a fairly wide distribution, rather than attempt an inclusiveness which would in any event be impossible of achievement. The chapter on the lyric is also certainly incomplete, and a widespread examination of medieval manuscripts would probably result in the discovery not only of numerous fragments but of complete poems. Nevertheless it is hoped that, despite such shortcomings, the evidence here presented is extensive enough to justify the conclusions which are drawn in the final chapter.

Some of the chapters are obviously greatly indebted to earlier works. Chapter I owes much to the edition of *Widsith* by Professor R. W. Chambers, and II to Dr C. E. Wright's *Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England.* Moreover it will be noted that some of the translations, those marked (W) in Chapters II and V, are reproduced from the latter work, and for permission to reproduce them I am indebted to the author and to the publishers, Messrs Oliver & Boyd. When such excellent translations already existed it seemed foolish to waste time in producing inferior ones of my own. Chapter V is ultimately based on an article on 'Some Lost Saints' Lives in Old and Middle English', first published in the *Modem Language Review* xxxvi, 161 ff., and I am indebted to the editor for permission to use this article as the basis of my chapter. The original article owed much to Dr R. W. Hunt, Keeper of the Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, both for advice and references, and the revised version remains under the same obligation. The chapters on lyrical

and political poetry are indebted to Mr G. E. Morris, and Chapter XI necessarily owes much to Sir E. K. Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage*. Some indication of other obligations to individual scholars will be found in the footnotes. In these, whenever possible, I have indicated secondary sources, whether or not I had derived my information from them or from a primary source. This seemed the most satisfactory method of indicating the earliest publication of the information in question; but I cannot hope to have been completely consistent, and no doubt a number of such references have escaped me.

It will have been noticed that the title of this book duplicates the title of the article in the *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* in which Professor R. W. Chambers first suggested the possible importance of the lost literature. Such duplication of title helps to express my indebtedness to that great scholar whose death deprived us of one of the most humane and inspiring of medievalists. Such articles on the subject as had appeared before his death received kindly notice from him, and I regret that he has not been able to see the final work, however inadequate it may be. The book owes its inspiration to one great scholar; and to another, Professor Bruce Dickins, it probably owes the fact that it ever appeared at all. His wide and accurate scholarship, his generous and kindly assistance, were always ready, and had it been possible to avail myself of them to an even greater extent, this book would undoubtedly have been worthier of the two great scholars to whom it owes its existence. Mr A. C. Cawley read the book in proof, and I am grateful to him for numerous corrections and suggestions which have improved it considerably. Finally, to Professor A. H. Smith I owe a debt of gratitude for his constant interest in the book, and for his guidance and help in preparing it for the press.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASS. . . . *Ada Sanctorum apud socios Bottandianos.*

Asser . . . W. H. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of Alfred* (London 1904).

Canterbury and Dover . . . M. R. James, *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover* (Cambridge 1903).

Chronica Majora . . . Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* (RS. 57).

Chronicle . . . C. Plummet & J. Earle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (Oxford 1892).

Continuity of English Prose . . . R. W. Chambers, *On the Continuity of English Prose* (London 1932).

De Principis Instructione . . . Giraldus Cambrensis, *De Principis Instructione* (RS. 21, viii).

Descriptio Kambriæ . . . Giraldus Cambrensis, *Descriptio Kambriæ* (RS. 21, vi).

EETS——Early English Text Society: Original Series.

EETS. ES_____Early English Text Society: Extra Series.

EHR———*English Historical Review.*

EHS. . . . English Historical Society.

Fabyan . . . R. Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France,* ed. H. Ellis (London 1811).

Florence . . . Florence of Worcester, *Chronicon* (EHS. 13).

Gaimar . . . G. Gaimar, *Lestorie des Engkes* (RS. 91).

Gemma Ecclesiastica . . . Giraldus Cambrensis, *Gemma Ecclesiastica* (RS. 21, ii).

Gesta Pontificum . . . William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum* (RS. 52).

Gesta Regum . . . William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum* (RS. 90).

Hardy , . . T. D, Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland* (RS. 26).

Higden . . . *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden* (RS. 41).

HMC. . . . *Historical Manuscripts Commission.*

Huntingdon ... Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum* (RS. 74).

Itinerarium Kambriæ . . . Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerarium Kambriæ* (RS. 21, vi).

Langtoft. . . *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft* (RS. 47).
Leland. . . L. T. Smith, *The Itinerary of John Leland* (London 1907).
Liber Eliensis . . . D. J. Stewart, *Liber Eliensis* (London 1848).
Mannyng . . . *Chronicles of Robert of Brunne* (RS. 87).
Map, *De nugis curialium* . . . M. R. James, *Walter Map De Nugis Curialium* (Anecdota Oxoniensia, part xiv: Oxford 1914).
MHG——Middle High German.
MLN. . . . *Modern Language Notes.*
MLR. . . . *Modern Language Review.*
Monasticon . . . W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis, & B. Bandinel (London 1846).
OE. . . . Old English.
OHG——Old High German.
ON——Old Norse.
Ordericus . . . Ordericus Vitalis, *Historiæ Ecclesiastics*, ed. A. Le Prevost (Paris 1838-55).
RS. . . . Rolls Series.
Speculum Ecclesiæ... Giraldus Cambrensis, *Speculum Ecclesias* (RS. 21, iv).
SS——*Surtees Society.*
STS. . . . Scottish Text Society.
Symeon of Durham . . . Symeon of Durham, *Historia Regum* (RS. 75).
Warton . . . T. Warton, *History of English Poetry*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt (London 1871).
Wendover . . . Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum* (EHS. 8).

I

HEROIC LEGEND

HOW much of the heroic poetry of the Germanic peoples has been lost will never be known. In Old English there remain only one complete epic, *Beowulf*, two fragments, *Finnsburg* and *Waldere*, and the two short poems *Widsiih* and *Deor;* from the continent come the *Hildebrandslied* and the medieval *Nibelungenlied* ,together with the Scandinavian poems of the *Elder Edda* which were not written down before the 13th century. It is certain enough that these represent only a very small fraction of the heroic lays known to the Germanic tribes, the earliest references to such literature dating from the period when the Anglo-Saxons were still on the continent. At the beginning of the Christian era Tacitus had told of the ancient songs in which the Germanic tribes celebrated their gods Tuisto and his son Mannus;[1] elsewhere the same author tells how the deeds of Arminius were still celebrated in the songs of his people.[2] Nothing more is heard of such songs until the 4th century when the Emperor Julian compared the songs of the barbarians across the Rhine to the croaking of harsh-voiced birds,[3] an opinion apparently shared by the 5th-century bishop of Clermont, Sidonius Apollinaris, who complained of having 'to bear up under the

[1] J. G. C. Anderson, *Cornelii Taciti De Origine et Situ Germanorum* (Oxford 1938), p. 6.

[2] J. Jackson, *The Annals of Tacitus* (Loeb edn.), Bk. ii, cap. Ixxxviii.

[3] W. C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian* (Loeb edn.) ii. 423.

weight of Germanic words', and of having to praise 'though with a wry face, whatever the Burgundian, with his hair smeared with rancid butter, chooses to sing'.[1] Similarly, towards the end of the 6th century, Venantius Fortunatus, in the introduction to his poems, speaks of the constant buzzing of the harp as it resounds to the barbarian lays.[2] This is practically all that we hear of such literature from non-Germanic observers, and it is to be regretted that their scorn prevented them from preserving some of these songs. For further evidence of the popularity of such poetry amongst the Anglo-Saxons we are dependent on later writers.

In Anglo-Saxon England there are occasional general references to the pagan and heroic stories. The whole tenor of Bede's account of the beginnings of Christian poetry in England suggests that the songs sung at the feast, which Caedmon left when he saw the harp nearing him, were of this type, and certainly a contrast appears to be intended between such songs and the Christian poetry which Cædmon is said to have composed.[3] Elsewhere the same author tells how the monks of Jarrow, on the occasion of a visit to St Cuthbert, began to amuse themselves with stories, to the great distress of the saint who exhorted them to prayer, having learned in a vision, as the monks afterwards discovered, that plague had broken out in the north.[4] Here again the tone of the description would suggest that it was the old heroic stories with which the monks were entertaining each other. St Guthlac,

[1] W. B. Anderson, *Sidonius, Poems and Letters* (Loeb edn.) i, 212. See also the unknown poet in the *Latin Anthology*, ed. A. Riese (Leipzig 1894) i, 221:

'Inter "eils" goticum "scapia matzia ia drincan"
Non audet quisquam dignos edicere versus.'

[2] *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi* IV, i, 2.

[3] See also C. L. Wrenn, *The Poetry of Cædmon* (Oxford 1948), p. 10.

[4] B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of St Cuthbert* (Cambridge 1940), p. 247.

in his youth, was inspired by songs of the ancient heroes.[1] Asser tells of Alfred's fondness for such poetry—including the well-known story of how he received from his mother a book of Old English verse,—and it was above all the learning of Old English poetry which that king recommended to his children.[2] Such poetry may have included the Christianized epics of Cædmon or Aldhelm, but references in Alfred's own works show that the heroes of the pagan period were familiar to him. Similarly it was one of the charges brought by his enemies against St Dunstan that he had learned the vain songs of ancestral heathendom,[3] and the canons of King Edgar forbade monks to sing such songs, even to themselves.[4]

Yet, despite ecclesiastical opposition, there can be no doubt that the old heroes were remembered throughout the Old English period. Written versions of some of the poems may have been known to Alfred, but most of such poetry probably existed only by oral transmission. Exactly what this oral heroic poetry was like we can never know. It could survive only in written versions, and when these were made sophistication of the older material was inevitable. All that later references can give is some vague hint of the heroes whose names and deeds were longest remembered, and occasionally, if we are fortunate, some garbled version of the deeds themselves.

The earliest of the Germanic peoples to leave their northern home were the Goths. Their wanderings, and the later glory of the Gothic kingdoms, provided subjects for many heroic lays. In fact, although there is no real proof, it may even be that the development of epic poetry amongst the Germanic tribes was to some extent the work of Gothic minstrels. Certainly Jordanes tells of songs which dealt with the early

[1] *ASS.*, April, ii, 39 ff. [2] *Asser*, pp. 20, 59, 58.
[3] *Memorials of St Dunstan* (RS. *634 11*).
[4] B. Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England* (London 1840) ii, 256.

wanderings of the Goths,[1] and in later times a surprising number of the heroes of epic were Gothic in origin, even amongst the northern tribes which had long been separated from them. In England one of the greatest of the heroic figures was Eormenric, who had established a great Gothic empire stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. When this was attacked by the Huns Eormenric, according to Ammianus, committed suicide; but Jordanes has a different story. The Rosomoni having revolted against him, Eormenric caused a woman of that tribe to be torn asunder by wild horses. In consequence he was attacked by her brothers and wounded in the side so that he became sick and infirm. The Huns took advantage of this to move in battle array against the Ostrogoths, and in the midst of these troubles Eormenric died.

In England references to Eormenric occur in three of the existing examples of heroic poetry, but they are too brief to give much information about the stories connected with him which were known in this country. The author of *Widsith*

> in the company of the gracious lady Ealhild, from Angel in the East, sought the home of the Gothic king Eormenric, fierce and faithless *(Widsith, 5-9)*,[2]

and a later reference in the same poem (lines 88-94, 109-16) is followed by a list of Gothic heroes of the household of Eormenric,—Hethca, Beadeca, the Herelings, 'Emerca and Fridla, and Eastgota, sage and good, the father of Unwen', Secca and Becca, Seafola and Theodoric, Heathoric and Sifeca, Hlithe and Incgentheow. Professor Chambers would identify Ealhild with Swanhild, the wife of Eormenric in

[1] C. C. Mierow, *The Gothic History of Jordanes* (London 1915), p. 62.

[2] R. W. Chambers, *Widsith* (Cambridge 1912), p. 189. The introduction to this edition contains by far the best account of the heroic characters known in England. On Eormenric see also C. Brady, *The Legends of Ermanaric* (California U.P. 1943).

Scandinavian tradition whom he ordered to be torn apart by wild horses, a deed from which sprang all his later misfortunes. However, even if the identification be accepted, the reference here affords no proof that her later fate was known in England. The mention of the Herelings and Sifeca as members of his household may indicate that the story, found in greatest detail in MHG. tradition, telling how Eormenric caused the death of his nephews, the Harlungs, through the wicked counsel of Sibka, was known also in England. But the deed seems to have been attributed to Eormenric only at a comparatively late date, and there is no particularly close connexion between the various characters in this passage. In *Deor* (21-6) Eormenric is represented as a great and terrible king, but with no indication of any particular story connected with him. On the other hand, the reference in *Beowulf (*1197-1201) must have to do with some definite story, though it is found nowhere else and the details are completely unknown:

> I have not heard of a better treasure of heroes under the sky since Kama carried off to the bright castle the necklace of the Brosings, the gem and the treasure; he fled the malicious hostility of Eormenric; he chose everlasting gain.

From this it would appear that Hama had robbed Eormenric of the *Brosinga mene* and had then fled from the court, or possibly been killed. There is obviously some connexion between this jewel and the ON. *Brisinga men*—the necklace of Freyja stolen from her by Loki—but it is impossible to discover the exact relationship. Eormenric slew the Harlungs for their treasure, and it has been suggested that this may have included the *Brosinga mene,* and hence that these lines in *Beowulf* provide a further reference to the Harlung legend; but there is no evidence to support such a conclusion. Hama himself appears elsewhere in heroic legend as the enemy of Eormenric. The allusion in *Didrekssaga,* which tells how he fled the enmity of Eormenric and later entered a monastery

taking with him a great treasure, may perhaps be a Christianisation of the unknown story referred to in *Beowulf*.

This is all that the extant literature can tell us about the stories of Eormenric current in this country. On occasion the occurrence in the historic period of place-names and personal names, which can be connected with the characters of heroic legend, has been brought forward as evidence that the legends were known. If such names are of an uncommon type, it is not improbable that early possessors of them may have been named from one of the heroic characters. But later children may ratjier have been named from some living man, and we can never be certain that the parents actually had the legend in mind when they named the child. The continued use of such names may have helped to keep the original legends alive, but we can hardly assume that in every case the name comes from the hero, and therefore that his story is still known and repeated.

All that is certain is that Eormenric was well known in Anglo-Saxon England as a type of fierce and cruel tyrant. It is possible that some version of the Harlung story, known today mainly from MHG. sources, was in circulation. There was also certainly current some story dealing with Eormenric, Kama and the *Brosinga mene,* of which the details are unknown.

The longest remembered of all the evil deeds of the legendary Eormenric was the story of his tyranny and treachery towards his nephew Theodoric. The latter was certainly well-known in Anglo-Saxon legend, though whether as the foe of Eormenric is more doubtful. In *Widsith* (115) he probably appears as one of the champions of Eormenric, and there is no hint of enmity between the two. The author of *Deor* knew of some story connected with a Theodoric, though whether the Ostrogoth or the Frank is uncertain:

> Theodoric possessed for thirty years the city of the Maerings; that was known to many *(Deor* 18-19).

Such allusiveness indicates that the story was familiar, and the mention of Eormenric immediately afterwards may be an indication that the hostility between the two was equally well-known. Consequently this may perhaps refer to Theodoric's legendary thirty years of exile; nothing, however, is known of the city of the Mærings. A reference to a different story is to be found in *Waldere*. A speaker, probably Waldere, is referring to a famous sword:

> I know that Theodoric thought of sending it to Widia, and also much treasure with the sword, of adorning much beside it with gold. The kinsman of Nithhad, Widia, son of Weland, received the reward for past deeds, because he had delivered him from prison. He hastened forth through the domain of monsters *(Waldere* ii, 4-10).

This is presumably a reference to a story, found in MHG., telling how the hero was rescued from the giants of Duke Nitger by Hildebrand, Widia and Hama. Other references in OE. indicate a familiarity with Theodoric as a hero of legend. The 9th-century *Old English Martyrology* tells how Theodoric was hurled in torment down the crater of a volcano, and adds 'that was the King Theodoricus whom we call Theodric',[1] obviously identifying the heretic king with the hero of vernacular legend. Elsewhere Alfred's statement, in his translation of Boethius, that 'this Theodric was an Amuling',[2] must be information derived from the heroic poems of which he was so fond.

There are, then, possible references to two stories concerning Theodoric which were extant in Old English—his sojourn in the city of the Mærings, and his rescue by Widia—, of which the former has been lost entirely or so changed in later tradition as to be unrecognizable. It is possible that his hostility to Eormenric was also known, but of the other stories, if any, which were current no trace now remains. A difficulty lies in the fact that there were at least two Theodorics famous

[1] Ed. G. Herzfeld (EETS. 116), p. 84.
[2] Ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford 1899), P- 7.

in heroic legend, the Ostrogoth and the Frank. When the exact stories are unknown we can never be certain with which of them we have to deal, and it may be that some of the above references are to the Frankish rather than to the Ostrogothic king. So some scholars prefer to identify the Theodoric of *Widsith* and *Deor* with the hero of the later story of Hug-Dietrich and Wolf-Dietrich.

Two other Gothic heroes, often mentioned together, are the Wudga and Hama who appear as outlaws in *Widsith* (124-30). Mention has already been made of the reference in *Beowulf* to an unknown story dealing with Hama, and his characterization in later continental literature suggests that he was regarded as the typical outlaw of the period. Wudga, or Widia, was probably an earlier and more important hero who was attracted at a comparatively late date into the Eormenric cycle. He is usually identified with the Vidigoia mentioned by Jordanes as one of the Gothic heroes, still remembered in song, who fell in battle against the Sarmatians.[1] In Anglo-Saxon England he was the hero of a story telling of the rescue of Theodoric, and the same reference shows that his legendary descent from Weland was also known. His fame lasted until after the Conquest, and he is mentioned by Lazamon in his description of the arming of Arthur, where the king's mail-coat, Wygar, is said to have been forged by Witege.[2] Since he is known here as a smith, his descent from Weland may be all that is still remembered of him. At a much later date he appears, in company with other Germanic heroes, in a late version of the *Brut*, which tells how 'Hrothwulf and Hunlaf, Unwine and Widia, Horsa and Hengest, Waltheof and Hama, some in Italy, some in Gaul, others in Britain, and the remainder in Germany, achieved fame by their weapons and warlike deeds'.[3] This is the last reference in England to the

[1] C. C. Mierow, *op.cit.*, pp. 62, 101.
[2] F. Madden, *Lazamon's Brut* (London 1847), lines 21129-34.
[3] R. W. Chambers, *op.cit.*, p. 254.

two heroes Wudga and Hama, and it may be doubted whether the writer really knew anything of the legends to which he so glibly refers.

The same passage in the *Brut* gives also the last reference to another great Gothic hero, Unwine, whose name at any rate was remembered long after the Conquest. He is probably identical with the Hunuil said by Jordanes to have been the son of Ostrogotha, but he did not succeed his father and apparently died young. In *Widsith* (114) he appears only as the son of Eastgota; and whilst this reference suggests that he was known as the hero of some story, no other mention of him is to be found before the 14th century. In the *Fasciculus Morum,* written perhaps before 1340, he appears 'in Elfland, where now, so they say, remain those strenuous warriors Unewyn and Wade'.[1] He is mentioned in the alliterative *Morte Arthure,*[2] and possibly appears with Attila in the shorter 15th-century Latin version of the romance of *Waldef:*

> At that time [i.e. after Arthur] there reigned in Norfolk a certain king called Attalus. In Suffolk ruled Unwyn, king of Thetford, who fought in single combat against Attalus. But the two were reconciled without the intervention of a mediator.[3]

Nowhere have we any hint of the deeds by which Unwine won his fame, unless perhaps the last reference preserves a dim remembrance of a single combat between Attila the Hun and Unwine the Gothic champion, both now shrunk to petty East Anglian kings. Yet for his name and fame to have lasted so long he must have been an important figure in Anglo-Saxon legend.

Apart from the Goths, heroes from other nations provided subjects for Anglo-Saxon minstrels. No doubt the last great battle of the Burgundians, when the bodyguard of Gundahari fell round their king, was as well-known in England as on the

[1] *MLR.* xiv, 1 ff.
[2] Ed. E. Björkmann (Heidelberg 1915), w. 2867-8.
[3] *MLR.* xv, 77. [3] *MLR.* x v ,7 7 . 9

continent. The king himself, under the name of Guthhere, was certainly known, though no reference to his last great battle with the Huns has survived. Widsith (65-7) received a ring from Guthhere in reward for his songs, and the latter was one of the chief characters in *Waldere*, though the main emphasis of that poem seems to have been on the relationship between Waldere and Hagena.

These Gothic and Burgundian heroes were known to the Anglo-Saxons only by reason of their common Germanic stock; but, as we should expect, they knew too of heroes belonging to their own peoples. One of the most popular of these seems to have been the Offa who ruled over the Angles during the 4th century, whilst they were still on the continent. The English sources show at least two different stories connected with him. In *Widsith* is a mention of his famous duel at Fifeldor, a story told at length in Saxo Grammaticus. But the centuries intervening between the two accounts prevent us from assuming that the story, as known in England, agreed in detail with that which was known in 12th-century Denmark. In the OE. poem is a bare allusion to what was evidently a well-known story:

> Offa ruled Angel, Alewih the Danes: he was boldest of all these men, yet did he not in deeds of valour surpass Offa. But Offa gained, first of men,' by arms the greatest of kingdoms whilst yet a boy; no one of his age did greater deeds of valour in battle with his single sword; he drew the boundary against the Myrgings at Fifeldor. Engle and Swæfe held it afterwards as Offa struck it out *(Widsith* 35-44).

No direct reference to this story appears elsewhere in Old English, but in *Beowulf* (1931-60) there is a general notice of the bravery of Offa and a bitter attack on the wickedness of his queen Thryth. Yet despite the lack of references the story must have lived on, since, in the 12th century, a monk of St Albans, in order to glorify the monastery and its reputed founder, wrote down the legends about the two Offas which

were current at the time. In his *Vitae duorum Offarum*[1] the monk tells how Warmundus, king of the West Angles, had an only son Offa, of great stature and enormous strength, but blind until his seventh and dumb until his thirtieth year. The Mercian nobles, led by Riganus, conspire against Offa and demand the kingdom. Warmundus is too old to lead his army to battle, but in the crisis Offa prays for the gift of speech and, this being granted, volunteers to lead the king's army against the rebels. The two armies meet on the banks of a deep river across which Offa dashes, slays the two sons of Riganus, and leads his army to a complete victory. When he returns home his father resigns the throne to him and soon afterwards dies. One day, while hunting, Offa meets with a maiden who claims to be the daughter of the king of York and to have fled from the unnatural lust of her father. Offa marries her and has twin children. Some years later he goes to help the king of Northumbria against the Scots and is victorious. He sends a letter to his nobles telling of his victory, but the letter is intercepted by the king of York who substitutes a forged letter in which Offa tells how he has met with disaster due to divine wrath at his marriage. Therefore he orders his wife and children to be exposed in the woods and there killed or maimed. Accordingly mother and children are taken to the forest; the children are slain but restored to life by the prayers of an anchorite who hides all three in his cell. On the return of Offa the treachery of the king of York is discovered and punished, but only after a long and weary search are Offa's wife and children restored to him.

Although the locality has been changed it is evident that the story of the duel is still vaguely remembered. This appears to be the reason for an otherwise unexplained hesitation on the part of Offa's army to follow him when he first dashes across the river to attack the rebels. Similarly a reminiscence

[1] Ed. T. Wats (London 1640).

of the fact that the original duel was fought against two opponents is probably to be seen in the slaying by Offa of the two sons of the rebel leader. But the stories of his wicked wife, known to the *Beowulf* poet, have either been forgotten or transferred to the wife of the later Offa; instead a common folk-lore theme has been drawn into the legend.

One of the most widely known of the historical references which bulk so largely in the background of *Beowulf* appears to have been the story of Ingeld. Allusions to it are all that remain in Old English, but its probable outline can be gathered from a comparison of the various sources. It seems that the Danish king Healfdene had been slain by the Heathobard Froda. The sons of Healfdene, Hrothgar and Halga, evade the pursuit of Froda and eventually, in revenge for their father's death, burn the hall over the head of his slayer, though hints in *Beowulf* suggest that the English tradition may have represented the vengeance as achieved in a pitched battle. Some time later Hrothgar, fearing the vengeance of the Heathobards, attempted to settle the feud by wedding his daughter Freawaru to Ingeld the son of Froda. This is the state of affairs which Beowulf reports to Hygelac on his return home. But Beowulf considers that the peace obtained in this way will not last. In the retinue of Freawaru will be some Dane who will wear the treasures which his father had won from the Heathobards. Then some survivor of the fight in which Froda fell will urge on his younger comrade to vengeance, and the old feud will break out again. In fact we learn from *Widsith* (45-9) that a later attack by the Heathobards was only repulsed by the combined strength of Hrothgar and Hrothwulf.

Such a theme as this, the tragic figure of Ingeld hesitating between love of his wife and a desire for vengeance, was certain to attract the heroic poets. In later Scandinavian sources the Heathobards have been forgotten, and Froda and Ingeld are represented as Danish kings. The result is that

some authorities regard the struggle as a fight between two branches of the Danish royal house. Others retain more of the original character of the story in that the quarrel is still thought of as being between two nations; but since Ingeld has come to be regarded as a Dane, a different conclusion is given to the story and he is successful in his revenge.

The original version, in which the feud was between different nations, was evidently the one known in England, but the references are so vague that the details are now beyond recovery. Ingeld, however, was so well known in this country that in the 8th century Alcuin could quote him as a typical character of heroic and pagan legend. Writing to the monks of Lindisfarne he reproves them for their continued fondness for the old heroic stories:

> Let the word of God be read in the refectory; there the lector should be heard not the harper, the sermons of the fathers not the songs of the heathen; for what has Ingeld to do with Christ?[1]

The two Germanic heroes who remained longest of all in popular legend were undoubtedly Weland and Wada. The first of them long remained famous as one of the greatest of smiths, and, although only allusions to his fame survive from England, his story appears in the Old Norse *Velundarkviôa* and *Diôrekssaga*. The first tells how Weland and his two brothers wed three swan maidens. After seven years Weland's wife leaves him, whereupon he forges seven hundred golden rings one of which, having been stolen by King Nithhad's men, is givtn to the king's daughter Beaduhild. Weland himself is then captured, taken to the king's palace, hamstrung, and compelled to work in his smithy. After some time he succeeds in enticing there Nithhad's two sons, murders them, and makes jewels and goblets out of their eyes, teeth and skulls. Beaduhild then breaks her ring and brings it to Weland to repair. He violates her, regains his ring and with its aid is

[1] P. Jaffê, *Monumenta Alcumiana* (Berlin 1873), p. 357.

enabled to fly away, on his way alighting on the wall of the palace where he proclaims his vengeance. The account in *Didrekssaga,* except for the details of the vengeance, is very different. Weland enters the king's service willingly, there is no mention of the swan maidens, and much of the story is taken up with a feud between Weland and the king's smith and with the forging of the sword Miming. On one occasion when the king goes out to battle he leaves at home his stone of victory and promises half his kingdom and the hand of his daughter to anyone who shall bring him that stone before morning. In the accomplishment of this deed Weland slays the royal chamberlain, and the king, making this an excuse for withholding the reward, drives him away. Weland, intent on vengeance, reappears at court in the disguise of a cook and attempts to poison the king and his daughter. He is detected, lamed and made to work as a smith. The vengeance is accomplished in much the same way as before, and Weland then makes himself a garment of feathers and flies away, proclaiming his deeds and leaving behind in the smithy armour and weapons for the son, Widia, to be born to the princess.

The fullest reference to the story in Old English occurs in *Deor* (1-12), from which it is clear that Weland's imprisonment and subsequent vengeance were well known, though no indication is given as to how he had become Nithhad's prisoner. But the earliest reference to the legend is probably to be found on the Franks Casket, made in Northumbria towards the end of the 7th century. On the front is the representation of a smith at work, two headless bodies lie at his feet, and he holds in his hand a cup made from a skull. Two female figures face him, and beyond them is a man strangling birds. In all probability this scene portrays Weland's vengeance; the king's sons have already been killed, Beaduhild and her maid approach Weland, and Aegil kills the birds from the feathers of which Weland is to fashion his feather garment. On the top of the casket a man, with the help of his

wife, defends himself and his home by archery against the attack of assailants armed with shields, swords and spears. Over the head of the defender is the name Aegili in runic letters. It is tempting to connect this scene with the Weland scene on the front of the casket, and Aegili with Weland's brother Aegil. However none of the extant versions of the story contains anything which could have served as a model for this picture, so that, if connected with the Weland legend, it must represent a part of it which has since been lost.

A simple reference to Weland's fame as a smith is all that appears in *Beowulf* (452-5). More interesting are the two references in *Waldere;* in the first (i, 2-5) mention is made of the sword Miming, 'the work of Weland', whilst the second (ii, 4 ff.) has the reference to Theodoric and Widia already mentioned, in which the latter is said to be 'the kinsman of Nithhad, the son of Weland'. These show that the forging of Miming, and the fact that Weland's son was Widia—a detail perhaps hinted at in *Deor*—were known to the Anglo-Saxons. But whether the feud with Nitjihad's smith, of which in *Diôrekssaga* the forging of Miming forms a part, was also known, or whether it was a later development, is a question we are unable to answer. The only other reference in Old English shows that Weland's fame as a smith was known to King Alfred. In the translation of Boethius, when he comes to the Latin 'Ubi nunc fidelis ossa Fabricii manent', he perhaps misinterprets the name of the Roman hero and translates, 'Where are now the bones of Weland, or who knows where they be?'[1]

Although no complete version of the story of Weland has survived, it was obviously familiar to the Anglo-Saxons. So far as we can tell from the scanty evidence available, the versions known to them agreed in detail with neither of the Scandinavian versions, but shared characteristics peculiar to each. The death of the two sons before the violation of the

[1] **W. J. Sedgefield, op.cit., p. 46; cf. p. 165.**

daughter, and the appearance of Aegil, are details shared with *V0lundarkviôa; t*he use of the feather garment, the reference to the sword Miming, and the birth of Widia, appear only in the Old English and in *Diôrekssaga.*

References to the hero in Middle English show that his fame lived on after the Conquest. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* is a reference to the Pocula quae sculpsit Guielandus in urbe Sigeni'.[1] The hero of *Horn Childe* receives from Rimenhild a sword made by Weland and the equal of Miming;[2] and similarly in the 15th-century *Torrent of Portyngale* the king of Pervense gives to Torrent a sword made by Weland.[3] His fame lasted long in country districts, especially in Berkshire, as is shown by the occasional references of local antiquaries to the story, and from its use in Scott's *Kenilworth.* Nevertheless the Middle English references show little knowledge of the actual story of Weland. In all probability it had already been forgotten by the time of the Conquest, and his name and fame as a smith were all that survived.

On the other hand, stories of Wade certainly survived the Conquest; in fact we know more about the hero from Middle than from Old English sources. Originally he appears to have been some kind of sea giant, and most of the early references still connect him closely with the sea. *InDiôrekssaga* he is the son of King Vilcinus and a sea-wife, though otherwise the saga has little to say about him. In the MHG. *Kudrun* he has become a type of faithful retainer, but his old connexion with the sea is still remembered. The only reference to him in Old English occurs in *Widsith* (22), 'Wada ruled the Hælisings', and the first story concerning him appears in the *De nugis curialium,* where he is connected with legends of Offa of Mercia. A certain Gado, the son of a king of the Vandals,

[1] E. Faral, *La Legende Arthurienne* (Paris 1929), iii, 314.
[2] J. Hall, *King Horn* (Oxford 1901), pp. 183-4.
[3] Ed. E. Adam (EETS. ES. 51), w. 436 ff.

from love of adventure left his home as a boy and wandered through the world redressing wrongs. At last he comes to the court of King Offa who has just married the daughter of the Roman emperor. On their return home the Roman guests urge an attack on Offa, but the Romans are deterred by fear of his friend Gado. But when Gado has been called off to the Indies the Romans send a mighty army and refuse all Offa's terms of peace. In the meantime Gado, having completed his task, is returning home when his ship, against his will, carries him to Colchester. He greets Offa and, accompanied by a hundred chosen knights, goes to the headquarters of the Romans in an attempt to make peace but is repulsed. Thereupon he arrays the English forces, placing Offa with the main body in the market-place of the town, Offa's nephew Suanus with 500 men at one gate, and himself with 100 men at the other. The Romans avoid Gado and concentrate their attacks on Suanus who, at the third assault, appeals for help. Gado refuses, but as Suanus prepares for the next attack commands him to fall back. The enemy rush in and are met by Offa in the market-place, whilst their retreat is cut off by Gado. A great slaughter of the Romans follows until quarter is offered to the survivors, who return to Rome with their dead.[1] It is improbable that much of the original Wade remains in this very much romanticized story, though the boat which brings him to England against his will is obviously the magic boat of which we hear later.

A reference to another of the stories connected with Wade appears in an early 13th-century Latin sermon on humility:

> Ita quod dicere possunt cum Wade:
> Summe sende ylues
> and summe sende nadderes:
> summe sende nikeres

[1] Map, *Denugis curialium*, pp. 81 ff.

the bi den watere wunien.
Nister man nenne
bute Ildebrand onne.[1]

The late 13th-century *Fasciculus Morum* places Wada, along with Unwine (q.v.), 'in Elvelond', and in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* a widow warns King Arthur that it is useless for him to attack a giant, were he more valiant than Wade or Gawain.[2] In *Bevis of Hamton* he is classed with the hero in that both have slain dragons, perhaps a reference to another lost exploit.[3] His name is found in a list of famous heroes in the *Laud Troy Book*.[4] In *Troilus and Criseyde* (iii. 615) Pandarus tells a tale of Wade, and in the *Merchauntes Tale* (E 1423-4) there is a reference to Wade's boat. In Malory (bk. vii, cap. ix) the damsel Linet warns Sir Gareth of Orkney that 'were he as wight as ever was Wade' he will not be able to go through the 'pass perilous'. But Malory himself probably knew nothing of the hero, and simply got his name from the alliterative *Morte Arthure* of which he makes extensive use. Certainly by the time of Leland the old stories of the hero seem to have been forgotten, and when he comes across local traditions of Wade he can find nothing to add to them.[5] Yet a clearer memory of Wade's exploits must have persisted in some quarters, for when Speght edited Chaucer's works he was able to add details known to us from no other source:

> Concerning Wade and his bote called Guingelot, as also his strange exploits in the same, because the matter is long and fabulous, I passe it over.[6]

Some scholars suspect that Speght himself may have known very little of the story—which was why he preferred to 'passe it over'. It is not improbable that by this time the authentic

[1] M. R. James, *Academy* 1241, Feb. 1896, p. 137.
[2] Ed. E. Björkmann (Heidelberg 1915), w. 964-5.
[3] Ed. E. Kölbing (EETS. ES. 46, 48, 65), vv. 2604-5.
[4] Ed. J. E. Wülfing (EETS. 121, 122), w. 20-1.
[5] *Leland* i, 59.
[6] *The Works of Chaucer, 1598. Annotations.*

deeds of Wade had been forgotten, but at any rate the writer knew the name of Wade's boat, a detail to be found nowhere else.

Tales of this hero had flourished in England for almost a thousand years, yet the only one of them which has survived in any detail is that given by Map. And this Latin version probably has little in common with the vernacular stories of the hero which must have been common throughout the Middle Ages.

According to *Widsith* (32) 'Sceafa ruled the Lombards', and although no such king is known to historians the name of the hero was apparently familiar to the Anglo-Saxons. He appears at the head of the West Saxon genealogy, and the various references give a good idea of what must have been the general outline of the story. Sceafa, as a small child, was carried alone in a small boat to the island of Scandza, and the people of that land found him asleep, surrounded by weapons, with his head upon a sheaf of corn. He was brought up by them and eventually became ruler of the ancient land of the Angles. On his death, in obedience to his command, his people placed him in a boat filled with treasures and weapons and allowed the sea to carry him away.

It would seem that the hero was some legendary culture hero whom one or other of the tribes dwelling near the North Sea regarded as the founder of their royal family, The author of *Widsith* considered him a Lombard, but the later Ethelwerd says nothing of his nationality.[1] William of Malmesbury is the first to connect him with the original home of the Angles, and to tell of his arrival with the sheaf of corn, so that stories of the hero were evidently still current in the I2th century.[2] In this account Sceaf is said to have been the father of a certain Sceld, known from other sources as the eponymous

[1] H. Savile, *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores* (Frankfurt 1601), p. 842.

[2] *Gesta Regum* i, 121.

ancestor of the Danish royal family, and in *Beowulf* (4-52) a similar tale is told of a certain Scyld Scefing. It is perhaps possible that the version in *Beowulf* may have been the original form of the story; that the name was misunderstood as 'Scyld, the son of Sceaf' instead of 'Scyld with the Sheaf, thereby placing a new ancestor at the head of the genealogy, and that the story was then transferred from Scyld to his supposed father Sceaf. On the other hand the appearance of Sceafa as a king in *Widsith,* and at the head of the West Saxon genealogy, would suggest that the author of *Beowulf* may have transferred to Scyld a story which rightly belonged to Sceaf. It may be significant that Ethelwerd knows nothing of Scyld, and that William of Malmesbury has a mixed tradition which, whilst ascribing the episode to Sceaf, yet speaks of him as the father of Scyld.

The various references to these heroes, whether Gothic, Burgundian or Anglo-Saxon, make it clear that their names and deeds were widely known in England. It is hardly surprising that not a word has survived of the Old English narratives, whether in prose or verse, which must have existed concerning them. Many of the stories were probably never written down, and had they been the odds would still have been heavy against their survival. It is remarkable enough that three examples should have survived the numerous accidents which threatened their existence. Had the fragment containing *Finnsburg* been lost before its publication by Hickes, we might have suspected the existence of such a work from the Episode in *Beowulf.* But there is nothing whatever to make us suspect the existence of *Beowulf itself* or of the *Waldere* fragments; we should know of the latter story from continental sources but have no reason to suppose that it was current in England.

There are other references to heroic stories where the evidence is even less clear than in the examples dealt with. When references are numerous we can be certain that the stories

were widely known; when they are few the matter is more doubtful. Lack of reference may be due to accident, and the hero in question may have been quite as famous as any of those previously mentioned; on the other hand it may be due to the fact that that story or hero never was widely known and was soon forgotten. Judging from the allusion in *Beowulf* (874-97) we should expect some version of the *Vqlsungasaga* to have been known in England:

> He spoke all that he had heard tell of Sigemund's mighty deeds, much that was unknown, the warfare of the son of Wæls, the far journeys, the hostility and malice of which the children of men knew not at all, except Fitela who was with him when he was minded to say somewhat of such things, the uncle to his nephew; for they were always in every struggle bound together by kinship. They had felled with their swords very many of the race of giants. There sprang up for Sigemund after his death no little fame when the man bold in battle killed the dragon, the guardian of the treasure. Under the grey stone he ventured alone, the son of the chief, on the daring deed: Fitela was not with him. Yet it was granted to him that the sword pierced the monstrous dragon so that it stuck in the cliff, the noble blade. The dragon died violently. The hero had brought it to pass by his valour that he could use the ring-hoard as he chose. The son of Wæls loaded the sea-boat, bore to the ship's bosom the bright ornaments. The dragon melted in heat.

The reference could, of course, have been introduced into the poem at a comparatively late date, and the story may have been brought over by the Viking invaders. On the other hand if, as seems possible, an illustration of the death of Sigurd is to be found on the Franks Casket, it would indicate an early knowledge of the story in England.

'Hagena [ruled] the Holmryge and Heoden the Glommas' *(Widsith* 21); the two heroes mentioned here formed the subject of one of the most popular of all the Germanic tales, that which told of the everlasting battle between them. An Old Norse version is given by Snorri; a different one is to be found in the MHG. *Kudrun;* whilst Saxo appears to have harmonized two originally different accounts. We have no means

of knowing which of these versions was current in England, though the reference in *Dear* (36-41) would suggest a closer kinship with the MHG. *Kudrun:*

> . . . once I was a minstrel of the Heodeningas, dear to my lord. Deor was my name. For many years I had a good office, a gracious lord, until now Heorrenda, a man skilful in song, has received my land that the protector of warriors formerly gave to me.

There can be no doubt of the connexion between the OE. Heorrenda and the MHG. Horant, whilst the fact that Wada is mentioned in *Widsith* in the line immediately following the reference to Hagena and Heoden may suggest that he played his part in the OE., as in the MHG., version of the story.

The lord of Widsith is said to have been Eadgils the Myrging who, apparently, played an important part in the Offa saga. Saxo tells how Athislus, king of Sweden, was slain by Keto and Wigo in revenge for the death of their father, and it was this attack of two against one which led to Offa's duel against two opponents in an attempt to wipe out the stain on the Anglian name. It seems certain, however, that Saxo has confused the nationality of this Athislus. We know of only one Swedish king of the name, Athils son of 6ttar in the *Ynglingatal,* who is the Eadgils son of Ohthere of *Beowulf,* whose dealings with Hr61f Kraki were a favourite subject of Scandinavian story. But all our authorities agree that this Athislus died whilst celebrating a religious ceremony, not in a duel. Probably Saxo's confusionis due to the fact that the Myrgings were also called Swaefe, and, in view of the common medieval confusion of Sweden and Swabia, it is easy to see how a king of the Swæfe might come to be reckoned a king of Sweden. How far Eadgils was connected with the Offa saga as known in England it is difficult to say. *Widsith* speaks of Offa's antagonists as the Myrgingas, and such a connexion would explain Offa's duel with two opponents, traces of which seem to be apparent in the later English legends.

The only other hero mentioned twice in the extant records

is the Breca, son of Beanstan, against whom Beowulf has an unsuccessful swimming match. He is presumably the Breoca, prince of the Brondings, in *Widsith* (25), though the exact form of the legends concerning him must remain unknown. No doubt he was famous as a swimmer, but the story in *Beowulf* is confused, and the hero is more concerned with excusing his own failure than with telling of the prowess of his adversary.

Elsewhere in Old English, and especially in *Widsith*, are to be found the names of many heroes. Only exceptionally is there any mention of stories in connexion with them, so that we can never be certain that they were more than names to the Anglo-Saxon audience. When we know from continental sources that stories were current concerning them, it is not improbable that similar stories were known in England. So, amongst the followers of Eormenric was 'Eastgota, wise and good, the father of Unwen' *(Widsith* 113-14) who, in actual fact, appears to have been the great-great-grandfather of Eormenric. Cassiodorus, in a famous passage on the characteristics of the Gothic kings, seems to hint at some of the stories concerning him,—'Enituit enim Ostrogotha patientia'. Jordanes, enlarging on this, tells how Ostrogotha bore patiently the demands of his kinsmen the Gepids until, compelled at last to fight, he utterly defeated them.

Apart from Gundahari two Burgundian kings are mentioned, 'Gifica ruled the Burgundians' *(Widsith* 19), and Gislhere appears as one of the retainers of Eormenric. Now the Burgundian code of laws, drawn lip before 516, contains a reference to 'our ancestors of royal memory, Gibica, Gundemar, Gislahari, Gundahari, our father and our uncle. There can be no doubt that Gifica is to be identified with this Gibica, as also with the Gibeche of OHG. and the Giuki of Scandinavian legend, whilst Gislhere is to be identified with the Gislaharius whom later German tradition represented as the chivalrous younger brother of Gunther.

Theodoric ruled the Franks' *(Widsith* 24), and this Theodoric became a favourite hero of continental epic. Historically he was the son of Clovis and the conqueror of the Thuringians. The late gth-century *Poeta Saxo* tells of popular songs in his praise 1 and in the I3th century he appears as the hero of the MHG. romance of Hug-Dietrich and Wolf-Dietrich. But if stories of him were known to the Anglo-Saxons it is unlikely that they had anything in common with this. More probably they dealt with his Thuringian war and followed the legend of it as given by Widukind.

One of Saxo's tales tells how Sygarus, king of Denmark, caused Hagbarthus, the lover of his daughter Sygne, to be slain, and how Sygne shared her lover's death. There can be no doubt that this Sygarus appears as ruler of the 'Sæ-Dene' in *Widsith* (28); but although the story seems to have been popular in the Scandinavian countries we have no other evidence of its currency in England. Similarly the Hlithe and Incgentheow who appear in the catalogue of Gothic heroes are possibly identical with the Hlothr and Angantjrr of the Old Norse poem and of the *Hervararsaga.* On the other hand there is no doubt that the story of King Ongentheow of Sweden was well known in this country. He is the ruler of the Swedes in *Widsith,* and *Beowulf* remembers his death at the hands of Wulf and Eofor, and how the fierce king's threats to give his enemies 'to the gallows-tree for the sport of the birds' were visited on his own person.

If we are justified in equating the Ægelmund, Æadwine and Ælfwine of *Widsith* with Agelmund, Audoin and Alboin, it would appear that some of the Lombard kings were known in England. Paulus Diaconus has stories, no doubt taken from oral tradition, to tell of each of these. He tells how Agelmund saved from the water a child whose father was unknown, and caused him to be carefully brought up so that he became the greatest of champions. In connexion with Audoin and Alboin

[1] *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* i, 269.

we hear how Alboin slew in single combat the son of the king of the Gepids, and of how his father Audoin refused him the honour of his deed because he had not received his weapons from the king of some other people. Thereupon Alboin with forty companions betook himself to the king of the Gepids. The latter, after a struggle between the laws of hospitality and the desire for vengeance despatches Alboin home with the arms of his own dead son. Later Alboin annihilates the Gepids in a great battle, invades Italy, and is killed by his wife, a Gepid princess, in revenge for the slaughter of her countrymen. However, all that we learn of these heroes in Old English is from *Widsith,* where they figure simply as followers of Eormenric.

Two further stories must have been known in Old English, but the extant references are so puzzling that we can make little of them. These are the Maethhild story in *Deor* and the *Wulfand Eadwacer* fragment. Both present serious difficulties of interpretation; in the former the reference is too brief, in the latter too allusive, for us to be able to do more than guess at the original story:

> Many have heard that Geat's love for Maethhild grew boundless, that his grievous passion wholly reft him of sleep *(Deor* 14-16).

The name Maethhild is not otherwise known, and although Geat appears in some of the genealogies these give little help* Attempts have been made to connect it with some of the known heroic legends, but they have invariably been unsatisfactory, and it is probable that we have here a reference to some story which has otherwise disappeared. *Wulf and Eadwacer* almost certainly deals with a scene from one or other of the heroic legends, and connexion has been suggested with the Theodoric story or with the *Vqlsungasaga.* It may refer to one of the known stories, but more probably, like the Mæthhild reference, it has to do with one of the legends which has otherwise entirely perished.

Vague references such as these give allusions to stories which must have been known in England at one time or another. Whether they were at all widely current is a point which the references leave quite uncertain. Nor can we tell at what date the stories began to be forgotten, though it is probable that most of this type had disappeared long before the Conquest. Nevertheless we have here the Old English references, and we know something of the story from continental sources. There is a third type, however, in which we have an Old English reference, consisting merely of a name, but we know nothing whatever of the stories which may have been connected with that name. How many of the otherwise unknown heroes in *Widsith* would have evoked memories of heroic legend in the minds of the Anglo-Saxon audience, and how many were just as much mere names to them as they are to us? Some of the names, Helm, Sceafthere, Wald, Wod, Hringweald, look like conventional names for chieftains and may have been the poet's own inventions. Others, such as Cælic, Witta, Oswine, Gefwulf, Hethca, Wulfhere, may have been the names of real people, though if so we know nothing more of them. Nor can we say how many of the stories preserved by Saxo, or by other continental writers, may have been known in England. The fact that no Old English allusions to them have survived is obviously no proof that the stories themselves were unknown in this country.

II

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

THERE can be no doubt that subjects from Anglo-Saxon history were common in the literature of the period. Little enough of such literature has survived in Old English, and the probability is that much of it was never written down. The *Battle of Maldon,* together with the poems preserved in the *Chronicle,* of which the best known is the *Battle of Brunanburh,* are the only remains in the vernacular of this type of literature. If, as seems likely, some of the romances of the later Matter of England—notably *Havelok* and *King Horn*—are based on historical events of the Anglo-Saxon period, some form of the legends must then have been current, though no pre-Conquest reference to these stories has yet been discovered. In any case indications in some of the later Latin writers make it clear that Anglo-Saxon poets and story-tellers must have drawn much material from historical events of the period.[1] Thus William of Malmesbury obtained much of his information for the earlier period 'more from old songs, popular through succeeding ages, than from books written for the instruction of posterity',[2] and he is obviously referring to oral legends still current in some metrical form in his own day. Similar sources are referred to by Henry of Huntingdon who says, when approaching his own

[1] Many of the stories mentioned in this chapter are dealt with in more detail than is possible here in C. E. Wright, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (London 1939).

[2] *Gesta Regum* i, 155,

times, 'Thus far I have treated of matters which I have either found recorded by old writers, or have gathered from common report; but now I have to deal with events which have passed under my own observation or which have been told me by eyewitnesses of them.[1] Evidently in the 12th century legends, both oral and written, based on Anglo-Saxon history were frequent enough, and a reference in the Latin life of St Æthelberht of East Anglia indicates that such stories were already in existence during the Old English period. On his journey to the court of Mercia the saint is said to have been preceded by youths singing of the deeds of his ancestors. None of these songs has survived, and today most of the East Anglian kings are little more than names.[2]

Obviously it would be impossible to deal comprehensively with the stories based, however remotely, on their own history which were utilized by Anglo-Saxon minstrels. Many of them have probably vanished altogether, and references to others are so meagre that we cannot be certain whether the story in question was at all widely known. For some of them, however, the evidence is stronger. The legend may appear in different sources and in different forms, so that direct borrowing of the one from the other is unlikely; the earliest written reference may occur so long after the events on which it is based that the story must have undergone a long period of oral transmission; and lastly, on very rare occasions, there may be a reference to some actual written work.

In exactly what form most of this literature was current is a question which can hardly be answered definitely. The songs on the East Anglian kings were obviously in verse. The *cantilenae* known to William of Malmesbury must have been in some kind of metrical form, though this, of course, is no proof that the Old English versions were also in verse. As a rule our authorities say nothing concerning the form of the vernacular legends from which they quote. But since at the

[1] Huntingdon, p. 213. [2] *EHR.* xxxii, 214 ff.

beginnings of a literature[1] narrative is almost invariably in verse it has usually been assumed that all such legends were, if oral, in some free ballad metre, and if written, in the literary alliterative line. This is a mere assumption, and Dr C. E. Wright has shown that there is good evidence for the existence in Anglo-Saxon times of a narrative prose similar to that which was developed in Scandinavia. Consequently it is no longer possible to be quite as certain as some earlier scholars were as to the form in which these legends were preserved in the vernacular. Only when the fact is definitely stated can they be said to have been in verse. When no definite statement is made they are as likely to have been in prose as in verse, and it is not impossible that versions in prose and verse may have existed side by side.

There must have been in existence numerous legends dealing with the Anglo-Saxon conquest of which little more than vague references have survived. The most famous of such stories was probably that of Hengest and Horsa of which the outline appears already in Gildas, though obscured by that author's usual vagueness. Bede, two hundred years later, gives as a tradition the names of the characters, adds the pedigree of Hengest and Horsa, records the slaying of Horsa in battle by the Britons, and declares that his monument is still to be seen in the eastern part of Kent. The *Chronicle* adds to Bede some details concerning the battles between the invaders and the Britons, in which occasional phrases suggest derivation from early sagas on the subject. In Nennius the story is further elaborated and interwoven with a mass of legend dealing with the miracles of St Germanus. Here the vivid and straightforward narrative, in which is preserved a corrupt Old English phrase, has led to the suggestion that the author's ultimate source 'is an English

[1] Most of this literature was presumably extant only orally, but there appears to be no good reason for limiting the term to the written versions alone.,

saga in which the deeds of Hengest and his followers were preserved for later generations'.[1] This is the only one of the stories connected with the Anglo-Saxon conquest which has survived in any detail. That there must have been others is suggested by the traditional dates of the foundations of the various kingdoms, the preservation of the names of the early kings and of the royal genealogies, but all details have been lost.

The only other story obviously belonging to this same period is one which appears in Procopius. He tells how an Anglian princess from the isle of 'Brittia' was jilted by the king of the Varini, how she led a great army from the island to attack him, of his capture and of the final reconciliation between them. Presumably the tale reached Procopius frpm a Prankish embassy, which apparently included Angles from Britain, at the Byzantine court.[2] Whether the story has any historical basis or not we are unable to say. No reference to it is known from any other source, and some of the other information concerning Britain which Procopius appears to have derived from the same source is, to say the least, decidedly curious.

It is natural enough that legends and stories dealing with the period before the Danish invasions should be comparatively rare. English works are few, and by the time they become more frequent only the important stories would be remembered. The *Chronicle,* before the 8th century, is in general much too brief to give more than the merest hints of such legends, and apart from this there is only Bede and an occasional saint's life. Many of the stories in Bede are given

[1] C. E. Wright, *op.cit.*, p. 29. On the other hand Sir F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford 1943), p. 16, finds indications that the later history of Hengest and Horsa had been handed down in alliterative verse.

[2] H. B. Dewing, *Procopius: History of the Wars* (Loeb edn.) v, 255 ff-

on the authority of tradition, or on the testimony of an eyewitness. Among these are the stories of Gregory's meeting with the Angli in Rome, St Augustine's conference with the British bishops, the adventures of Edwin of Northumbria, the stories connected with Aidan, and the tale of Cædmon. Since most of these occur in Bede alone we have no means of knowing how widely spread they may have been, or whether they had in fact become part of the oral literature of the Anglo-Saxons. In only two cases are Bede's stories found also in another source; the meeting of Gregory with the Angli, and the vision of Edwin at the court of Raedwald, occur also, in somewhat different forms, in the *Vita antiquissima S. Gregorii* of the monk of Whitby. Yet, in the comparative absence of contemporary works produced in England, this lack of confirmation is not surprising, and it is likely enough that many of Bede's stories were widely known.

Vague hints of another story which may go back to this very early date are to be found in the *Gesta Herewardi.* Amongst a list of the principal followers of Hereward occurs a certain 'Godwin Gille who was called Godwin because he was not unequal to that Godwine, the son of Guthlac, who was formerly celebrated in the songs of the ancients'.[1] The only hero of this name known to us today is the great earl, and he was probably the son of Wulfnoth—at any rate there is no other authority for making him the son of Guthlac. It is not impossible that Godwine's true descent has been forgotten and that he has been provided with a new ancestor. Even so it is unlikely that the author of the *Gesta* would speak of one who was contemporary with the father of his hero as 'celebrated in the songs of the ancients'. In all probability the reference is to be taken in conjunction with the account of the parentage of St Guthlac in Ordericus Vitalis. The saint is said to have been the son of Penvaldus and Tetta, and

[1] Gaimar i, 372.

'after eight days the child was baptized and was named Guthlac, that is *belli munus,* from the tribe whom they call the Guthlacingas'.[1] We know nothing more about this tribe. They may have been a family who took a prominent part in the conquest, or in the early history of the Anglo-Saxons, and like the Old Norse Volsungar they may have had a saga to themselves. If so it has been entirely lost, and these two references are all that remain.

Some evidence for the existence of an Old English poem on the famous battles of the Anglo-Saxon period may perhaps be provided by the much later chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon. For many important battles the chronicler has an appropriate quotation introduced by some such phrase as *unde dicitur,* and many of these quotations, when turned into Old English, seem to fall naturally into alliterative verse. The first of them refers to the battle in which Rædwald defeated and killed -^Ethelfrith of Northumbria in 617. It is said to have been fought on the eastern bank of the river Idle, 'unde dicitur; "Amnis Idle Anglorum sanguine sorduit" '.[2] The elaborate account of the battle which follows was certainly not drawn from the *Chronicle,* but just as certainly appears to have a documentary basis of some sort. The next battle is that of Heathfield (633) in which Edwin of Northumbria was defeated and slain by Penda of Mercia and Cadwallon of Gwynedd, 'dicitur autem quod Hadfeld rubens undique nobilium fumabat cruore'. A year later Edwin's successor Oswald defeated and killed Cadwallon at the battle of the Denisesburn ('unde dicitur: "Cædes Cedwalensium Denisi cursus coercuit" '), and succeeded to a part of Edwin's power. But he never made an end of Penda who, in 642, descended on him and slew him at the battle of Maserfeld, 'unde dicitur, "Campus Masefeld sanctorum canduit ossibus" '. In

[1] Ordericus ii, 269.

[2] A similar phrase occurs in Wendover i, 116, who, however, may simply have borrowed from the earlier writer.

655 Penda himself was defeated and slain in a surprise attack by Oswy of Northumbria, and the importance of the event is marked by an elaborate description of the battle, and by the exceptional length of the quotation referring to it:

unde dicitur:— In Winwed amne vindicata est caedes Annæ,
Cædes regum Sigbert et Ecgrice,
Cædes regum Oswald et Edwine.

After this there is a long gap until the battle of Ellendune (825) by which Ecgberht of Wessex finally cast off the supremacy of Mercia. It was evidently fiercely contested, 'unde dicitur, "Ellendune rivus cruore rubuit, ruina restitit, fætore tabuit". [1] Huntingdon nowhere says definitely that he is quoting from a vernacular poem on the subject, though it seems probable enough. He was himself interested in Old English poetry; he gives a paraphrase of the *Battle of Brunanburh* and knows of the late Old English poem on the *Site of Durham.* So far as we can tell he seems to have been a conscientious, if somewhat credulous, historian, and it is difficult to believe that he is inventing the quotations in order to give a more authentic air to his history. It is perhaps possible that his original source may have been in Latin, though if so it would be difficult to account for the ease with which the quotations can be turned into passable Old English alliterative verse. If in fact the chronicler is quoting from Old English there is nothing to indicate whether he is using a single poem, or whether there were in existence various poems dealing with the different battles. On the whole it is unlikely that Henry knew much more about the various battles than the quotations which he gives. Had his originals gone into any detail he would probably have given a florid description of each battle, such as is found only in the cases of the battles of the-Idle and Winwed. It seems not unlikely that there was still extant during the 12th century an Old English poem on the

[1] Huntingdon, pp. 56, 90, 91, 95, 60, 132.

famous battles of the early period—most probably something after the style of *Widsith.* Some slight confirmation of such a theory may possibly be found in the chronicle of Peter of Langtoft in which reference is made to a still-remembered saying on the battle of Ellendune.[1] Peter's translator, Robert Mannyng of Brunne, improves on this by declaring that in his own time the battle was still celebrated in song by the country people:

> Under Elendoune be bataile was smyten.
> Men syng in bat cuntre (fele zit it witen)
> 'Elendoune, Elendoune, bi lond is fulle rede
> Of be blode of Bernewolf, per he toke his dede'.[2]

It is impossible to be certain whether Robert is here simply adapting his original, or whether he actually did know of songs on this subject. Occasionally he does add further information, more especially from popular songs, but it is difficult to believe that a not particularly important battle, fought in the south of Mercia, should still have been remembered five hundred years later in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Most probably Peter of Langtoft is drawing on Huntingdon and Mannyng simply paraphrases.

The only one of the Old English legends which still survives in the vernacular is the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard, as entered in the *Chronicle* under the year 755. There can be no doubt that it is taken from some story current at the time when the chronicler was writing. This is suggested by the vivid and circumstantial description of the events, with the stress on the ideals of the heroic age, and the occasional lapse into direct speech:

> And 31 years after Cynewulf ascended the throne he wished to expel a certain atheling called Cyneheard; and this Cyneheard was the brother of Sigebriht. And then Cyneheard heard that the king

[1] *Langtoft* i, 296.
[2] T. Hearne, *Peter Langtoft's Chronicle* (Oxford 1725) i, 14.

with a small troop was visiting a woman at 'Merantun'. He rode there and surrounded the place before the men who were with the king discovered him. When the king perceived this, he went to the door and defended himself boldly until he saw the atheling; then he rushed out against him and wounded him severely. They all continued fighting against the king until they had slain him. Then the king's bodyguard discovered the tumult because of the woman's cries, and they ran there as soon as they were ready and as quickly as possible. Then the atheling offered to each of them money and life, and none of them would accept it; but they continued fighting until they were all slain, except a British hostage and he was severely wounded. In the morning the king's thanes who had been left behind heard that the king was dead, and they rode there—his aldorman Osric, Wiferth his thane, and the men whom he had left behind. They came upon the atheling in that place in which the king lay dead; but the gates were closed against them When they went there. Then Cyneheard offered them money and land at their own choice if they would grant him the kingdom, and his men said that their kinsmen were with them and would not desert them. But the attackers replied that no kinsman was dearer to them than their own lord and they would never follow his slayer; but they offered to allow their kinsmen to depart from there unharmed. These said that the same offer had been made to their companions who were with the king. Then they said that they did not care for it 'any more than your companions who were slain with the king'. And they were fighting about the gates until they broke in and slew the atheling and all the men who were with him except one, he was the godson of the aldorman and so his godfather saved his life, but he was nevertheless badly wounded.

According to a later entry in the *Chronicle* eighty-four in all were killed in the fighting. All who have dealt with the story see in it one of the oral narratives of the Anglo-Saxons, but they are not agreed as to the form in which it was known to the chronicler. Some take it for granted that he is reproducing in prose an Old English poem, though if this were so we should have expected to find in it some trace of the original metrical form Dr C. E. Wright is more probably correct in finding in it evidence for the existence of an Old English prose saga. The story is quoted by later chroniclers,

and the occasional inclusion of details not in the *Chronicle* suggests that the story may have survived long in oral tradition. So Florence of Worcester knows that the sole survivor of the atheling's party, whom the *Chronicle* calls the godson of the aldorman, was also the son of Cyneheard.[1]

The great Mercian king Offa, and his wicked queen Cynethryth, seem to have been a fruitful source of story in Anglo-Saxon times, and these stories were still current in the later Middle Ages. The best known of them dealt with the death of St Æthelberht of East Anglia, but other stories had also become attached to the pair, and were finally written down towards the end of the I2th century by a monk of St Albans in his *Vitae duorum Offarum.* In this a common folk tale has been attached to the queen; she is said to have been related to Charlemagne, and, because of her wicked deeds, to have been set adrift in a ship, eventually being driven ashore on the coast of Offa's kingdom. She gives her name as Drida and the king, deceived by her story of why she had been cast adrift, marries her, so that henceforward she is known as Cwendrida. However she continues with her wicked deeds which eventually culminate in the murder of St Ethelberht. The name of Offa's queen was actually Cynethryth, and the fact that coins were struck in her name suggests that she was of some consequence. The only contemporary reference—a letter from Alciun to her son Ecgfrith in which he speaks of '(your) pious mother'—would indicate that she was known for her good qualities rather than otherwise. There may have been some confusion in later legend with Cwenthryth, the wicked sister of St Kenelm, or Offa's queen may have suffered for the sins of her daughter Eadburh. At the same time there is an obvious connexion between this story and the reference in *Beowulf* (1931-43) to

[1] Florence of Worcester i, 61. But this may be due to a misunderstanding by Florence.

Dryth, the wife of Offa of Angel.[1] Both tales obviously go back to the same source, and presumably referred originally to the wife of Offa of Angel. In the *Vitae* Offa I marries a wife of the patient, innocently suffering type, and the original characteristics of his queen have been transferred to Cynethryth, the wife of Offa II. Possibly her connexion, whether historical or not, with the death of St Æthelberht led to the conception of her as a monster of wickedness, and the identity of the second element of the names led the writer to attribute to the wife of Offa II a story originally belonging to the wife of Offa I.

Some of the odium attached to Cynethryth may perhaps have been due to the character of her daughter Eadburh. The latter was married to Beorhtric of Wessex, and stories concerning her seem to have been in circulation in Wessex during the 9th century. She is said by Asser to have begun 'to live as a despot in the manner of her father[1],—perhaps an indication of the presence in Wessex of legends concerning Offa. It was 'common knowledge' that she persecuted the favourites of Beorhtric, and eventually, by mistake, poisoned the king as well as a youth whom he favoured. The further adventures of Eadburh in France, whither she had fled on the death of Beorhtric, are then described. There she came before Charlemagne, and on being offered the choice of marrying the emperor or his son, she chose the latter on the score of his youth. In consequence she got neither, but nevertheless Charlemagne

gave her a great convent of nuns, wherein, having laid aside the secular dress and taken upon her the habit of a nun, she enjoyed, but only for a short time, the office of abbess. For as she had lived unrestrainedly in her own land (according to tradition), so much the more unrestrainedly was it discovered that she was living among a foreign people, for, having been debauched by a certain man of her own race, she was, at length, openly exposed, and driven from the

[1] See above, p.11.

convent by order of King Charles, and in poverty and misery she lived shamefully until her death. So, accompanied by one slave boy and begging day by day, at last she ended her life wretchedly in Pavia, as we have heard from many who saw her. [W.][1]

Since Eadburh was married in 789 and Asser wrote in 893 it is only just possible to accept the statement of the latter that he drew his information 'from many who saw her'. But whether this were the case or not there must have been extant in 9th-century Wessex quite a long narrative dealing with the adventures of Eadburh.

After the Viking invasions a number of legends arose which attempted to explain the raids as acts of private vengeance. The most famous of these stories is that of Beorn Butsecarl and King Osberht of Northumbria. Gaimar tells of the outrage of Beorn's wife by the king who, after hunting in the Ouse valley, called at her home for a meal at a time when her husband was guarding the coast from pirates. The lady falls ill, and her husband on his return asks the reason for her sickness. She tells him everything and asks him to kill her, but is comforted by Beorn who promises vengeance. In the morning he goes to York, defies the king, and leaves, along with many of the lords who support him. They abandon Osberht, make a knight called Aella their king, and resolve to call in the Danes. The Danes come and Osberht is defeated and slain by them. In the meantime Aella is out hunting, and is dining in the forest when a blind man appears and asks for food. The king boasts of his successful hunting, whereupon the blind man interrupts, tells of the capture of York by the Danes, and of the death of Osberht. As a sign that he is speaking the truth he prophesies that Aella's nephew Orrum will be the first to fall in the coming battle in which the king himself will be slain. Aella places his nephew in a high tower for safety and sets out for York, on the way meeting with men fleeing from the previous battle. In the

[1] *Asser,* pp. 12-14.

38

meantime Orrum tries, with the help of two shields, to fly from his prison. He lands without injury, seizes a horse and three javelins, and sets off for York. Overtaking the army he gallops to the front and advances first against the Danes. Two of them he transfixes with his javelins, but an archer then lets fly an arrow which pierces his heart. Mad with grief Aella rushes into the midst of the enemy, is killed, and his army defeated.[1] In this story the names of the kings are historical enough, but history knows nothing of the circumstantial story told by Gaimar. A similar account, though in a shortened form, is to be found in the 14th-century *Eulogium Historiarum* of Thomas of Malmesbury, and in the 15th-century chronicle of John Bromton. In these, however, the names of the Danish leaders are given as Hinguar and Ubba, thus bringing the story into connexion with another of the legends of the Viking invasions, one which attributed them to the sons of Ragnar Lothbrog. It has been suggested that Gaimar may have had a written source for his Beorn story,[2] but Dr C. E. Wright is probably correct in believing that the chronicler is drawing on oral tradition, a tradition which, considering the variations from Gaimar in the later writers, must have been extraordinarily long-lived. The 13th-century *Narratia de Uxore Aernulfi* tells essentially the same story, except that here Osberht's place is taken by Aella and the name of the injured husband is given as Aernulf.

Another series of legends told of the death of the famous hero Ragnar Lothbrog. According to Saxo, Ragnar was captured by Aella whilst ravaging Northumbria and cast into a pit of serpents, his sons afterwards harrying England in revenge for the death of their father. However if this version was known in England no reference to it has survived. Instead we have an entirely different story, found in its most elaborate form in Roger of Wendover, connecting the death

[1] Gaimar i, 104 ff.
[2] *MLR.* xxvii, 168-74.

of Ragnar with the later martyrdom of St Edmund. Lothbroc, a Danish king, is swept out to sea by a storm whilst hunting sea-fowl. After many days he is cast ashore on the coast of Norfolk and taken to King Edmund. He is received with honour, becomes a favourite of the king, and so arouses the jealousy of the chief huntsman Beorn. One day, whilst hunting, Beorn secretly slays Ragnar and hides the body, but the king and the court are led to it by a dog which Ragnar had befriended. Beorn is convicted of the murder and sentenced to be cast adrift in the same boat as that in which Lothbroc had come to England. The boat comes ashore in Denmark, is recognized, and Beorn is carried before the sons of Ragnar who demand news of their father. After various tortures Beorn claims that their father had been cast ashore in England and put to death by King Edmund. The sons vow vengeance, compel Beorn to act as guide, set out for England with a great army, and eventually succeed in killing Edmund.[1] Much of the story consists of quite conventional elements, and its elaboration suggests a long development. No doubt there is some connexion between the version in Wendover and the story in the Scandinavian sources. Edmund was known to have been killed by the sons of Lothbrog; this suggested the connexion of Edmund with the death of Ragnar, and so he replaced the almost unknown Aella in popular legend.

English records make no mention of Ragnar's ravages in England, which are so prominent in Scandinavian sources. In this respect he is completely overshadowed by two historical characters, Hinguar and Hubba, who are said to have been the sons of Lothbrog, and round whom numerous legends gathered. According to Saxo, Ragnar had four wives and by them eleven sons and two daughters. Most of these are unknown to English tradition which knows only of Halfdene (absent from the Scandinavian versions), Iwer

[1] Wendover i, 303 ff.

Hinguar (Saxo's Ivarr the Boneless), Hubba/Ubba (the Ubbo of Saxo), and Bærin (corresponding with the Scandinavian Bjorn). The most important of these were Hinguar and Hubba, and the best known of the legends connected with them deals with the martyrdom of Edmund, but occasional hints of other stories can also be detected. Geoffrey of Wells, *De Infantia S. Eadmundi (1*148-56), gives a different reason for the invasion of England:

> On a certain day therefore, when the sons were aiding their treacherous father in mischief and their own wickedness and pride were being triumphantly talked of, their father swelling with poisonous thoughts and raging with disdainful elation said, 'You are puffed up for nothing and cast forth your words to the winds. For what have you achieved worthy of remembrance in the hazards of battle? Forsooth a young man Edmund not many years ago embarked from Saxony, landed on the English shores with a few followers and disposes of the East Anglian realm at will. What have you ever accomplished to compare with that? What kind of offspring have I begotten in you?' They, incensed alike by envy as by their father's reproof, entered upon a joint design against Edmund, making crafty plans. After they had considered for a long time by what scheme they could attack him and had gathered together a great army of partisans for this purpose, they all with one assent determined that with their collected forces they should on a sudden attack his kingdom and destroy the people and the king by treachery and guile. [W.]

The same story appears in the Anglo-French life of St Edmund by Denis Pyramus. (c. 1170).[1]

Another story connected with the sons of Lothbrog deals with the raven banner. The B, C, D and E manuscripts of the *Chronicle* tell of an attack on Devonshire in 878 by 'the brother of Iwer and Healfdene'—presumably Hubba—who was there slain, 'and there was the banner captured which is called "The Raven" '. Further information is given in the *Annals of St Neots* which tell how the banner was woven in a single day by the three daughters of Ragnar:

[1] *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey* (RS. 96, i, 103; ii, 190 ff.).

People say also that in every battle in which this standard precedes [the warriors], if victory is to be theirs then there appears in the middle of the banner what seems to be a living raven flying; but if they are to be defeated, then it hangs down quite lifeless. And this fact has often been proved. [W.][1]

A similar banner possessed by Cnut is described by the 11th-century author of the *Encomium Emmae.*[2] The A text of the *Chronicle,* which is practically contemporary, has no mention of the banner; the other manuscripts and the *Encomium Emmae* belong to the 11th century whilst the *Annals of St Neots* apparently date from the 12th. Nevertheless the circumstantial account of the weaving of the banner in the last would suggest that the story was originally connected with the sons of Lothbrog, and that it was later appropriated by the biographer of Cnut. The banner appears again in the saga of Siward of Northumbria, though there is little beyond the name to connect it with the banner of the sons of Lothbrog. A dragon was ravaging Northumbria and was sought by Siward. In the course of his search he asks information from an old man whom he finds sitting on a hillock. The man warns him that his search will be in vain and prophesies that he will return to his ship, voyage to London, take service with the king, and later receive land from him. Siward expresses doubt about the prophecy, and says that the same doubts will be felt also by his companions. Thereupon the old man draws from his bosom a banner which he calls 'Ravenlandeye', and this he gives to Siward so that his companions will the more readily believe him. Siward eventually becomes earl of Northumbria, and after various adventures falls ill at York. There he gives his banner to the citizens of York who place it in the ancient church of St Mary.[3] Here the banner has probably been confused with the banner of

[1] *Asser,* p. 138. [2] Ed. A. Campbell (RHS. 1949), p. 24.
[2] J. A. Giles, *Vita Quorundum Anglo-Saxonum* (London 1854), PP. 5-9-

Harald **Harðráði,** the *landeyôa* 'landwaster', with the ON. *eyôa* of the second element replaced by the OE. *ege*.

On f. 141b of MS. 32 in the library of Pembroke College, Cambridge, are preserved, in a 12th-century hand, two alliterative verses on the sons of Lothbrog:

Ynguar and Vbbe Beorn was be pridde
Lobebrokes sunes lobe weren criste.

These are followed by a note in Latin telling how Hubba was slain at 'Vbbelaue' in Yorkshire, whilst Beorn, after he had destroyed the church at 'scapeia' and violated the nuns there, was engulfed by the earth as he was riding in full armour and with lance erect at 'frendesbiri' near Rochester.[1] Probably the two lines of poetry are simply two mnemonic verses, and almost certainly the writer of them knew nothing more, but it is possible that they may at one time have formed part of a poem on the sons of Lothbrog of which the remainder has been lost. The Latin note suggests that the deaths of these famous Vikings had given rise to still more legends. Historically nothing is known of the fate of Beorn; Hubba is said to have been killed in an attack on Devonshire in 878; Ivarr died in Ireland in 873, and Halfdene was killed in battle there in 877. But such endings were too tame for legend, as is shown by the note in the Pembroke MS., and the possibility that such stories may have been widespread is suggested by the existence of a somewhat different version in the *Liber de Hyda:*

Hynguar was drowned whilst crossing a ford in Berkshire, and the ford, even to the present day, is called 'Hyngarford' by the country-people, from his name. Hubba, indeed, whilst he was riding, the earth suddenly opened and swallowed him.[2]

---

[1] *Anglia* xlii, 147 n. l.

[2] *Liber Monasterii de Hyda* (RS. 45, 10). Mr A. C. Cawley suggests that there may be some connexion between this Hubba and the Ubbe of *Havelok the Dane.*

Legends of the Viking invasions seem, at a later date, to have been confused with earlier stories of the Anglo-Saxon conquest. In the chronicle of Robert Mannyng are references to stories about the founders, real or legendary, of Scarborough and Flamborough. The founders, Scarthe and Flayn, are represented as the followers of a certain Engle from whom the country afterwards received its name:

When Engle hadde be lond al borow,
He gaf to Scardyng Scardeburge;
Toward be northe, by be see side,
An hauene hit is, schipes in to ryde.
Flayn highte his broker, als seyb be tale
pat Thomas made of Kendale;
Of Scarthe & Flayn, Thomas seys,
What pey were, how pey dide, what weys.
Mayster Edmond seis, as me mones,
pat be Engle hadde nynetene sones.
pyse nynetene, after pe fader deuis,
Departed pe lond in nynetene partis.
Of po parties fond y non wryten,
But o partie pat y can wyten;
pe nynetenpe partie was pat pynge
pat langed to seint Edmond pe kynge:
pis ys pat oper skyle y fond
Why hit was called Engelond,
Als Maister Edmond per-of seys,
& as he seys, y seye pat weys.[1]

From this it would appear that Mannyng knew of two works dealing with the exploits of these heroes, one by Master Edmond, and one by Thomas of Kendale. Both have since disappeared, but a summary of the story, as told by Master Edmond, is given by Mannyng, from which it would appear that Scarthe was regarded as a Briton. After Britain had been won by the Angles a British king called Engle came and laid claim to the land. Fearing Engle and his champion Scarding the Angles then made him king of the country. However

[1] Mannyng ii, 514.

Thomas of Kendale evidently told a very different story; he knew a more correct form of the hero's name and told also of his brother Flayn. Despite Mannyng there can be no doubt that these legends dealt originally with the Viking and not the Anglo-Saxon invasions. They are evidently to be connected with the account of the foundation of Scarborough in *Kormakssaga:*

> The brothers [i.e. Thorgils and Kormak Qgmundarsynir] fought in Ireland, Wales, England, Scotland, and they were accounted the most splendid men. They first built the fortress which is called Scarborough. They raided into Scotland and took many fortresses, and had much force; there was no one like Kormak in the army as far as strength and courage were concerned.[1]

Elsewhere in the same saga we learn that Skarôi was the by-name of Thorgils, and the two brothers are obviously to be identified with the Scarthe and Flayn of English tradition, the former having given his name to Scarborough, the latter to Flamborough. Presumably the nicknames of the two brothers, Skarôi and Fleinn, had been remembered in English tradition when their real names were forgotten. There is no indication in *Kormakssaga* that the hero had any nickname; but the saga gives little attention to nicknames, and that of Thorgils would also have been unknown to Norse tradition had it not been by chance embedded in two of Kormak's verses.[2] Nothing is known about the exploits of Scarthe and Flayn, or of the works by Thomas of Kendale and Master Edmond in which they were celebrated, except for what Mannyng himself tells us. Since this is the case with stories which we know once had a written existence it is not surprising that others, probably never written down at all, have left even slighter traces. Mannyng knew of legends which had gathered round a certain Ynge, and asserted also that they were extant only in an oral form:

[1] *Kormaks Saga,* ed. Th. M6bius (Halle 1886), p. 54.
[2] *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* i, 320.

> But of Ynge saw y neuere nought,
> Neyper in boke write ne wrought;
> But lewed men berof speke & crye,
> & meyntene al-wey vp pat lye.

Earlier in his chronicle this Ynge had appeared in legends connected with the Anglo-Saxon invasions, and she is said to have been that daughter of Hengest, whom Mannyng knew better as Ronewen.[1] But despite Mannyng there were Middle English writings about Ynge. A fragment exists telling how *wassail* and *drinkhail* came into this land through 'mayde ynge' from whom the land takes its name. The rest of the story follows closely the story of Hengest's acquisition of land as given by La3amon, but with the credit usurped by Ynge. Afterwards the land is divided up into Kent, Essex,—and here the fragment breaks off.[2] Obviously there is no historical basis for such a story, and it does not seem possible to connect Ynge in any way with the Ing of the *Runic Poem.* Presumably the whole story is a comparatively late concoction, with the name Ynge derived from the name of the country, and the exploits of some of the early invaders attributed to her.

It will be seen that whilst some of the traditions connected with the Danish invasions had been written down at one time or another, others were probably never more than oral legends. Of the English kings who bore the brunt of these invasions the best known is Alfred, and in later times numerous stories appear to have become attached to his name. The most famous of these is, of course, the story of the cakes, which first appears in the *Annals of St Neots,* where it is given on the authority of a life of that saint no longer extant.[3] No pre-Conquest reference to the story is

[1] Mannyng ii, 515; i, 264.
[2] T. Hearne, *Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle* (Oxford 1810), pp. 73I-3-
[3] *Asser,* p. 136.

known, its presence in Asser being due to an interpolation by Archbishop Parker, but it is found in many of the lives of St Neot as well as in an early 12th-century English homily. Despite its comparatively late appearance it is likely enough that the story was in circulation during the Old English period. Many other stories of King Alfred occur in the lives of St Neot, all tending to the glorification of the saint, but there is no evidence to suggest that they were at all widely known, and they may have been invented by the compilers of the lives. Similarly Higden, following Malmesbury, has a story of Alfred, disguised as a minstrel, entering the camp of the Danes and so learning their plans. The same story is found in the Winchester annals and in the pseudo-Ingulph, and all have apparently transferred to Alfred a story told of Olaf Cuaran before Brunanburh.[1]

Much better evidence is available for the story of how Alfred's ghost walked after his death. It is given on the authority of tradition by William of Malmesbury, who says that the body of Alfred was first buried in the cathedral, but that afterwards

> because of the folly of the canons, who asserted that the royal spirit, resuming its body, wandered nightly through the buildings, Edward, his son and successor, removed the remains of his father, and gave them a quiet resting-place in the New Minster.[2]

Also connected with Alfred are the stories which seem to have circulated during his reign concerning Denwulf, bishop of Winchester.[3]

The 10th century was the most glorious period of Anglo-Saxon history. Some of the greatest of the West Saxon kings were reigning and, since the *Chronicle* fails for most of the

[1] Higden vi, 376 ff., *Gesta Regum* i, 126; cf. *Liber de Hyda* (RS. 45> 47), and H. Savile, *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores* (Frankfurt 1601), p. 869.

[8] *Gesta Regum* i, 134.

[8] Florence of Worcester i, 97; cf. *Gesta Ponttficum*, p. 162.

time, we know comparatively little about many of them. However some of them apparently struck the imagination of their contemporaries, with the result that numerous tales grew up round their names. More especially does there seem to have been a rich growth of legend round the figure of Athelstan, though most of the stories connected with him have been preserved only by 12th-century chroniclers. William of Malmesbury tells of the alleged illegitimate birth of the king:

> There was, in a certain village, a shepherd's daughter of wondrous beauty. One night she dreamed that the moon shone from her womb and lit up the whole of England. Next morning she told her dream to her companions, and it eventually reached the ears of a woman who had formerly nursed the sons of the king. Because of the dream she adopted the maiden and brought her up as her own daughter. One day Edward the Elder, whilst passing through the village, visited his old nurse. He became enamoured of the maiden, passed the night with her, and from this single intercourse was conceived the future king Athelstan.[1]

There is certainly no historical basis for such a story, and equally little for that which tells how Athelstan was responsible for the death of his brother Edwin. The first mention of it comes from Symeon of Durham, who simply says 'King Althelstan ordered his brother Edwin to be drowned in the sea'[1,2] but Malmesbury gives fuller details. A conspiracy against the king is said to have been made by a certain Alfred. Edwin was accused of complicity

> and compelled to go on board a vessel with a single attendant, without a rower, without even an oar, and the boat was crazy with age. Fortune laboured for a long time to restore the innocent youth to land; but when, at length, far out at sea, the sails could not endure the violence of the wind, the young man, sensitive and weary of life under such circumstances, put an end to his existence by a voluntary plunge into the water.

---

[1] *Gesta Regwn* i, 155 ff. [2] Symeon of Durham ii, 124.

The attendant eventually brings his master's bodyto land, and Athelstan, repenting of his deed, inflicts vengeance on the accuser of his brother.[1] Both these stories are said to have been taken from ballads 'popular through succeeding times', and legends of Athelstan and his brother seem to have lingered even as late as the16th century in some districts.[2]

The most famous historical event of Athelstan's reign was the battle of Brunanburh, and Malmesbury tells a vivid story of how Olaf Cuaran, in the disguise of a minstrel, entered the English camp on the evening before the battle:

> [Anlaf], who perceived how great a danger threatened, cunningly undertook the duty of reconnoitring, and putting aside the insignia of royalty took a harp in his hands and made his way to the tent of our king. Here, singing before the entrance and now and then also plucking the resounding strings in pleasing harmony, he was readily admitted, professing himself a minstrel who earned a daily wage by this kind of art. For some time he delighted the king and his companions with his melodious entertainment, though during his singing he took careful note of all he saw. When the end of the feast had put a limit to these pleasures and the talk of the soldiers again became full of the serious business of war, he was given a reward for his song and ordered to depart. Loathing to take this away with him he buried it in the ground. This act was noticed by one who had previously served him in war and was immediately reported to Æthelstaix, who found fault with him because he had not betrayed their enemy when he was in their presence; but he made answer: 'The same oath which I lately made to you, O King, formerly I made to Anlaf; if you had seen me break it against him you would have reason to beware of a similar happening with regard to yourself. But deign to listen to a servant's advice, namely, that you remove your tent from here, and, staying in another place until the rest of your forces come, you will with but a slight delay defeat an enemy now wantonly exulting.' [W.]

This advice having been accepted, the place on which the king had encamped was taken by an unnamed bishop who was killed, in mistake for the king, in a night attack made by Anlaf. Although later chroniclers transfer the story to Alfred

[1] *Gesta Regum* i; 156 ff. [2] *Leland* ii, 86.

there can be no doubt that in Anglo-Saxon times it was current in connexion with Olaf, and probably formed part of the saga of Olaf Cuaran which later contributed much to the Middle English *Havelok the Dane.*

Athelstan's successor was Edmund, and his murder in 946 is said to have given rise to numerous legends throughout England:

> A certain thief, Leof, whom [the king] had exiled on account of his robberies, returned after six years' absence and, on the Feast of St Augustine, Archbishop of Canterbury, took his place unexpectedly among the royal guests at Pucklechurch, as on this day the English were accustomed to keep festival in joyous manner in memory of their Apostle; and by chance sat down next to a councillor, whom the king himself had considered worthy of a place at his table. This fact was noticed by the king alone, the rest being deep in their wine; and his anger being roused and fate egging him on he leapt up from the table, seized the robber by the hair, and threw him to the ground. [But the robber] secretly drew his dagger from its sheath and with as much force as he could plunged it into the king's breast as he fell above him; of this wound the king died and stories of his death spread over the whole of England. The robber too was immediately surrounded by the retainers and torn limb from limb, but not before he had wounded several of them. [W.][1]

This circumstantial account, including the preservation of the robber's name, suggests that Malmesbury is quoting from one of the legends of which he speaks, and in fact he could have derived his story from no other source. The murder is recorded, with more or less elaboration, by others of the Latin chroniclers, and by the time of John of Wallingford has become one of the legends attached to St Dunstan.[2]

It was only to have been expected that later legend should have been busy with the reign of Edgar, and, at the time when Malmesbury wrote, ballads concerning the king were still

[1] *Gesta Regum* i, 143, 159.
[2] T. Gale, *Scriptores XV* (Oxford 1691) iii, 541.

extant. After telling of the favour shown to foreigners during his reign, the chronicler continues, 'for this history justly and deservedly blames him; but the other imputations of which I shall tell afterwards, rest upon no better authority than ballads'. Later three stories derived from these ballads are given. The first tells how Edgar came to marry Ælfthryth:

There was a certain Æthelwold, a distinguished nobleman of his own age and a close confidant; to this man the king entrusted a task, that [he should go] to Ælfthryth, the daughter of Orgar, duke of the Devonshire people, whose beauty had impressed his informants to such an extent that they praised her in the king's hearing—this man, I say, he ordered to go and see her and to propose marriage to her [on the king's behalf] if report should prove true. [Æthelwold however] hurrying on his way and finding nothing different from his expectation hid his errand from the parents and won the girl for himself. Returning to the king, [he told] only what was for his own interest and alleged that she was but small in form and of vulgar and common appearance and in nowise fit for his majesty. Æthelwold's detractors made known [to the king] with what cunning this man, led astray by and involved in these and other amours, had cheated him. He, driving out wedge with wedge, that is to say parrying deceit by deceit, showed a calm countenance to the earl and jocosely named a day on which he would visit so much-discussed a woman. [The earl] however, beside himself with fright at such dreadful jesting, hastened to his wife begging her to consider his safety and as much as she could to let her clothes detract from her beauty, then for the first time disclosing what he had done. But what did this woman not presume to do? She dared to deceive the trust of her unhappy lover and first husband and to deck herself out at the mirror, omitting nothing that would stir the heart of [this] virile young king. Nor did it happen otherwise than was planned, for so inflamed was [Edgar] at the sight of her that, concealing his hatred, he slew the earl in Wherwell Forest, whither he had been summoned to join the king in hunting. When the bastard son of the slain man arrived at the spot with accustomed familiarity and was asked by the king how he liked such sport, he is said to have replied: 'Very well, [my] lord king, for what pleases thee ought not to be distasteful to myself'; by this reply he so assuaged the mind of the furious [monarch] that the latter treasured nothing more dearly in his life after this than that boy, alleviating the offence of this tyrannical act against the father

by royal care towards the son. As an expiation of this crime a community of nuns dwells there in a monastery built by *Ælfthryth*. [W.][1]

The story is dealt with much more elaborately by Gaimar. In his version Æthelwold persuades the king to act as godfather to his son, thus placing Edgar and Ælfthryth within the prohibited degrees, and so leading to the introduction of Dunstan into the story. He may have derived his knowledge from some oral legend current round Wherwell, and one certainly different from that known to Malmesbury, for there are effective touches in Malmesbury which Gaimar omits. Moreover, the latter may have had a written source for his story since there are references in his narrative which perhaps indicate this,[2] though if so his source has long since been lost. If Gaimar obtained the story from Wherwell it would help to explain the different conceptions of Ælfthryth which appear in the two accounts. In Malmesbury she sets out deliberately to inflame the king; in Gaimar she plays quite an inriocent part. Now the queen was the foundress of the monastery at Wherwell, and stories from that district would tend to improve her character as much as possible. It is probable, however, that Malmesbury's version was the earlier and the more widespread, at any rate judging from the fact that other writers have little that is good to say of the queen. At the best she plays a very ambiguous part in the death of Edward II, and she is also said to have been responsible for the death of Abbot Byrhtnoth of Ely. The latter of these stories appears in the *Liber Eliensis* which tells how the abbot, on his way to the king's court, surprised the queen whilst she was engaged in various magical and unnatural practices. In order to prevent her misdeeds becoming known she attempts to seduce the abbot, and failing in this, plots with her women to kill him in a particularly horrible fashion.[3] This part of the *Liber Eliensis* is said to be based on the

[1] *Gesta Region* i, 165, 178. [2] Gaimar i, 166.
[3] *Liber Eliensis*, pp. 171-3.

work of Richard of Ely, who lived during the early part of the 12th century. Presumably the story represents some local legend of the death of Abbott Byrhtnoth, but no other source appears to connect *Ælfthryth* with it.

The second of Malmesbury's tales concerns the carrying off of a nun:

> Hearing of the beauty of a certain virgin who was dedicated to God, [Edgar] carried her off from the monastery by force, ravished her and frequently made her the partner of his bed. When this circumstance reached the ears of St Dunstan, he was vehemently reproved by him, and underwent penance for seven years, submitting, though a king, to fast and to forgo the wearing of his crown during that time.

Later it appears that the name of the lady was Wulfride, and that she was not a nun 'but a lay sister who had assumed the veil through fear of the king'. The third story, like the preceding one, appears only in Malmesbury:

> King Edgar, they say, arriving at Andover, which is a town not far from Winchester, ordered to be brought to him a certain nobleman's daughter, the report of whose beauty had spread abroad. The girl's mother, scorning to allow her daughter to become his concubine, and helped by the darkness of night, substituted in the [king's] bed, her maid, a virgin indeed neither unpleasing nor devoid of charm. When the night had passed and dawn was breaking, the woman began to get up, and being asked why she made such haste replied that it was to carry out the day's work for her mistress; held back though with difficulty by the king, she bewailed on her knees her miserable condition [and begged] that as a reward for lying with him he would grant her her freedom, [adding] that it was not becoming his greatness, that she, after ministering to his royal pleasure, should suffer longer under the commands of her cruel masters. Then he, with a foreboding smile, his anger being moved [and] wavering between pity for the girl and anger against her mistress, as if treating the whole thing as a joke, gave her the fulfilment of her wishes. Soon he raised her with great honour to be mistress of her former masters, whether they wished it or not. [W.]

With the possible exception of Gaimar's source it is probable that these stories were current only orally, whilst the various

stories connected with *Mlfthryth* suggest that there may once have been in existence a long saga telling of her deeds.

The disasters of the reign of Ethelred seem to have led to the development of as many stories as did the glories of that of Edgar. Malmesbury tells how the appearance of seven Danish ships off Southampton in 980 led to. the circulation of numerous rumours about them,[1] whilst behind Huntingdon's story of the brave man of Balsham must lie some local tradition which has otherwise been completely lost:

> [The Danes] burnt Cambridge; and withdrawing thence through the hilly parts of a most pleasant and delightful place which is called Balsham; put to death everyone they found in that place; and tossing the children [in the air] caught them on the points of their spears. A certain man however, worthy of far-flung fame, mounted the steps of the church tower, which to this day stands there; and fortified as much by the position as by his courage, defended himself alone from the whole host. [W.]

Memories of the massacre of the Danes on St Brice's Day, 1002, must have long survived. Some of the later chroniclers, e.g. John of Wallingford, give highly-coloured descriptions of it. The earlier ones usually have little to say about the event, yet Henry of Huntingdon tells us that, when a boy, he had heard some very old persons describe the massacre.[2] Unfortunately he has little to say about these stories, which must already have lived in oral tradition for almost a century.

One of the most famous of the battles fought against the Vikings during the reign of Ethelred was that in which Byrhtnoth, aldorman of Essex, was defeated and slain in 983. One of the few surviving OE. poems on historical subjects deals with the battle; in all probability it was composed soon afterwards, and appears to be fairly historical. The *Chronicle* passes briefly over the battle, and the account in the *Vita Oswaldiy* probably written by a monk of Ramsey between

[1] *Gesta Regum* i, 179, 186,
[2] Huntingdon, pp. 178, 174.

997 and 1005, although it adds a few details unmentioned in the poem, is probably also based on fact. Yet by the 12th century numerous legends have grown up, and some of them are said to have had a written existence in the vernacular. In the *Liber Eliensis* Byrhtnoth has become aldorman of Northumbria, and is said to have fought two battles against the Vikings at Maldon. In the first he was victorious, but in the second, which took place four years later and lasted for fourteen days, he was defeated and slain. On his way to the battlefield he was refused hospitality by the abbot of Ramsey but welcomed by the abbot of Ely, because of which he gave great presents of land to that monastery. After the battle Byrhtnoth's head was cut off and taken away by the victorious Danes, and the abbot of Ely, who had taken up the body from the battlefield, buried it in the church with a round lump of wax in place of the head. The writer states definitely that he draws some of his information from English works, and, considering his material, these must have been very different from the extant OE. poem, though they may ultimately have been based on it.[1] Apparently similar stories were known to the writer of the Ramsey chronicle (c. 1175), though, mindful of the honour of his own monastery, he made Byrhtnoth leave land to it as well as to Ely.

According to the *Chronicle* the Vikings at Maldon were led by Olaf Tryggvason, and although the latest editor of the poem rejects this it is certain enough that Olaf was one of the most prominent of the Viking leaders of the period. He became the subject of Old Norse sagas, and there is some slight evidence for a written account of his life and deeds in English:

> King Edward made it a custom to relate the Saga of King Olaf Tryggvason to his great men and his bodyguard on the first day of Easter; and he chose that day rather than any other for the telling

[1] *Liber Eliensis*, **pp.** 180-3.

of the Saga, saying that Olaf Tryggvason was superior to other kings as much as Easter Day is superior to the other days of the whole year. There was a man named Orm, Thorliot's son, a wise and truthful man, who lived at Dyrness in the Orkneys when Edward was King of England. Orm declared that he heard King Edward read the Saga of Olaf Tryggvason out of the very book that Olaf himself had sent to King Athelred from Jerusalem. One year when the king had read before his great men and all his bodyguard the account of the battle on the Serpent, with the story of King Olaf's escape, exactly as we have related it; and had told them of his journeys beyond the sea to Jerusalem, and how he had fixed his abode at a cloister in England—he added to the story by announcing the death of Olaf Tryggvason, tidings of which had lately been brought to England by travellers from Syrland. [W.][1]

No doubt there was a considerable admixture of Scandinavian blood in the chief men at Edward's court; but it is difficult to believe that many of them would be able to understand Norse, and almost certainly Edward himself would not. Consequently, if we are to believe the story, and the evidence is not particularly convincing, a written English version of the saga of Olaf Tryggvason would seem to have once been in existence.

Ethelred's reign ended in disaster, but the death of the king removed one of the chief reasons for defeat, and under Edmund Ironside, despite treachery amongst the English magnates, the Danes were fought to a standstill and peace made on the basis of a division of the kingdom. Edmund had apparently just suffered a crushing defeat at Ashingdon, and had fled westwards pursued by Cnut, when the war ended suddenly in this way. It is not surprising that such a dramatic and unexpected end should have led to the growth of legend, and before long we find a story telling how Cnut and Edmund had fought in single combat for the possession of England. The *Encomium Emmae* and William of Malmesbury both refer to a proposal that the possession of the kingdom should be settled by single combat, but nothing comes of it.

[1] *Fommanna Sôgur* (Copenhagen 1827) iii, 63 ff.

Henry of Huntingdon is the first to give a detailed description of the fight, which is said to have taken place on an island in the Severn.[1] Gaimar apparently knew only of the earlier story in which a duel is arranged but the idea abandoned in favour of a peaceful settlement. Moreover in his version the proposed duel was to have taken place on a ship, not on an island as in all other versions. Towards the end of the century Map knows of a legend giving circumstantial details of the fight, and later writers tell much the same story:

Matters having been arranged with the due solemnity which befitted them, a time having been fixed and guards armed, [the combatants] carried in two boats from opposite shores met on an island in the Severn, equipped with excellent and most valuable arms and horses, as their honour and defence required. On their failures and successes after the beginning of the combat we are not able to dwell (but must pass on to other things), and [tell] how for a long time both sides in silence and throughout varying chances were agitated in turn by sad fears and joyful hopes, as the motionless army watched breathlessly. And this gave rise to a memorable saying; since their horses were slain they fought on foot and Cnut, tall and slim, wearied Edmund, who was heavily built and fleshy (that is to say, rather stout), with such blows good and bad that in an interval of rest, while Edmund was standing panting quickly and breathing heavily, Cnut said (in the hearing of those surrounding them): 'Edmunci, you are too short breathed.' He blushing with shame was silent and in the next assault came down on his helmet with such a mighty blow that [Cnut] fell on his hands and knees, but [Edmund] springing back did not overwhelm the fallen man nor hold him down thus smitten, but in revenge returned word for word, and said: 'Not too short breathed if I can bring so great a king to his knees.' The Danes, therefore, seeing that Edmund had spared their lord in a combat of such great purpose and had forborne to vanquish him in so easy a victory, with many prayers and tears urged them to make a treaty to the effect that for the rest of their lives they should possess the kingdom equally divided between them, and the survivor should succeed to the whole on the death of the other. [W.][2]

[1] Huntingdon, p. 185. [2] Map, *De nugis curialiwn,* pp. 212 ff.

It is clear that, on whatever historical foundation it may have been based, there was extant in Map's time a story which told in detail of this single combat, one moreover which was so well known that the words of Cnut and Edmund had become proverbial.

The most notorious of the great magnates during the reign of Ethelred was Eadric Streona, and, judging from the evidence, it would seem that his evil deeds were remembered, and perhaps added to, long after his death. Florence of Worcester, under the year 1006, connects him with the death of the aldorman Ælfhelm:

> The deceitful and faithless Edric Streona plotting treachery against the noble Duke Ælfhehn prepared at Shrewsbury a great banquet for him, at which when his guests came Edric received him as his particular friend; but having prepared his snares, on the third or fourth day of the entertainment he took him with him hunting in the forest, where, everyone being occupied in the chase, a Shrewsbury butcher, Godwin Porthund, that is, Dog of the Town, whom Edric had bribed beforehand with large gifts and many promises to commit the crime, suddenly leapt on him from ambush and evilly slew Duke Ælfhelm. [W.][1]

No other evidence for the story is known, but the whole business, considering the character of Eadric, is not improbable. He next appears, in connexion with the death of Earl Uhtred, at a time when his treacheries had apparently gone astray and he had fled to Cnut. Uhtred remained faithful to Edmund, but a northward advance by Cnut drew him away to protect York. He found Cnut too strong, had to surrender, and the *Chronicle*, s.a. 1016, notes that 'he was nevertheless slain by the advice of the aldorman Eadric'. The *De Obsessione Dunelmi* says that he was slain by a certain 'Turebrand cognomento hold', and Florence of Worcester gives a similar account, neither of them mentioning Eadric. In the last campaign against Cnut Eadric was again with Edmund, and it was his treachery which led to the final defeat of the

[1] Florence of Worcester i, 158.

English. The *Chronicle* merely says that at the battle of Ashingdon 'then the aldorman Eadric acted as he had done so often before, began the flight with the Magessete, and so betrayed his royal lord and the people of the whole of England'. Later writers give more detail. William of Malmesbury places the occurrence at the battle of Sceorstan:

> After the feast of St John, having joined battle with [the Danes] at Sherston, he parted company with the issue undecided; the English initiated the flight at the instigation of Eadric, who standing in the enemy's ranks and holding a sword in his hand, which he had stained with blood in the fight by cutting down quickly a certain peasant, cried out: 'Flee, wretches, flee; behold your king has been killed with this sword!' The English would have fled forthwith had not the king, perceiving the act, rushed to a prominent spur of land and taking off his helmet shown his features to his followers. Then, with as much strength as he could launching an iron spear he hurled it at Eadric; but, perceived and avoided by [Eadric], it pierced instead a soldier standing near, so far that it transfixed another also. [W.][1]

Florence of Worcester places the episode at the same battle and gives a longer version of the speech,[2] whilst Huntingdon transfers it to the battle of Ashingdon and quotes the actual English words used by Eadric—'Flet Engle, flet Engle; ded is Edmund'.[3] The *Encomium Emmae,* drawing apparently on a different version of the story, ascribes the treachery to Ashingdon, gives Eadric's worlds in a slightly longer version, declares that he was bribed by the Danes, and makes him speak before and not during the battle.[4]

In later legend Eadric appears also to have played a part in the death of Edmund. Some of the early accounts hint at an unnatural death, but the first to declare this openly, and to accuse Eadric, is that of the Archdeacon Herman in his

[1] *Gesta Regum* i, *215.*
[2] Florence of Worcester i, 175. [3] Huntingdon, p. 184.
[4] Ed. A. Campbell (R.H.S. 1949), p. 24.

De miraculis S. Eadmundi.[1] William of Malmesbury is more cautious, but he too has heard current stories which blame Eadric for the death of Edmund,[2] and a similar account is found in Huntingdon, where however the son of Eadric is named as the murderer. In Map the death is brought about by a concealed iron spike and no mention is made of Eadric. Gaimar agrees with the others in naming Eadric, but makes the death due to a mechanical contrivance.

Eadric did not long survive Edmund. He was put to death in the following year, and it was inevitable that legend should soon connect the two events. The *Chronicle* gives no reason for his death, whilst in the *Encomium Emmae,* Florence of Worcester and William of Malmesbury he is slain by Cnut from suspicion of disloyalty, because of his previous record of treachery. Henry of Huntingdon is the first to connect the two events:

> And so Eadric coming to King Cnut saluted him, saying: 'Hail to thee who art sole king.' To whom, when he had laid bare the accomplished deed, the king replied: 'As a reward for so great an allegiance, I will set you higher than all the leading men of the English.' He therefore ordered him to be beheaded, and his head to be set on a stake on the highest tower in London. [W.][3]

Gaimar makes Cnut himself the executioner, and has the head and body left on the bank of the Thames whence the tide carries them out to sea. In Map it is the unnamed slave responsible for the death of Edmund who is put to death by Cnut. There can be no doubt that there must once have been in existence a long narrative, whether in prose or verse, dealing with the career and death of Eadric, of which disconnected stories in the later chronicles are now all that survive.

Cnut plays an important part in some of the stories already mentioned. In addition he had one legend peculiar to himself,

[1] *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey* (RS. 96, i, 39).
[2] *Gesta Regum* i, 217.
[3] Huntingdon, p. 186.

his encounter with the waves. This appears first in Huntingdon and is repeated, with some additions, by Gaimar. Another story existed concerning the marriage of his daughter Gunhilda to the Emperor Henry. William of Malmesbury tells of the splendour of the wedding, concerning which ballads were still sung in the streets, and of the false accusation later made against the bride:

> The splendour of the wedding pageant was striking, and is even in our times frequently sung in ballads about the streets. . . . Proceeding in this manner to her husband, she preserved for a long time the bonds of matrimony. At length, being accused of adultery, she opposed in single combat to her accuser who was a man of gigantic size, a young lad who took care of her starling whom she had brought from England, whilst her other attendants held back in cowardly fear. When therefore they engaged, the accuser, through the miraculous interposition of God, was defeated by being hamstrung. Gunhilda, rejoicing at her unexpected victory, renounced the marriage contract with her husband; nor could she be induced either by threats or endearments again to share his bed, but taking the veil of a nun she calmly grew old in the service of God.[1]

A century later Matthew Paris speaks of songs on the subject as still being current, and since he gives the name of the page, Mimecan, it is clear that he is not simply quoting from Malmesbury.[2] Ralph of Diceto gives also the name of the accuser, Rodingar.[3] In one form or another these ballads must have had a life of at least two hundred years, yet none of them has survived.

Godwine of Wessex, the greatest of the nth-century magnates, was probably a descendant of Eadric Streona. However, later legend, attracted by the figure of the great earl, preferred to represent him as the son of poor parents. The fullest account of the later legends connected with him is to be found in Map. Ethelred is separated from his companions whilst hunting and seeks shelter in the house of a

[1] *Gesta Regum* i, 229. [2] *Chronica Majora* i, 514.
[3] *Abbreviationes Chronicorntm* (RS. 68, i, 174).

peasant. The son of the peasant is so attentive and courteous that the king takes him to court, exalts him above all the men in the kingdom, and eventually makes him earl of Gloucester. In return Godwine clears the land of Vikings and fights many battles across the sea, so that 'his name was as famous among the Saracens as among the Christians, and his repute was everywhere without rival'. After the accession of Cnut Godwine fights so successfully against him that the king is forced to come to terms. However Cnut, under pretence of further honouring the earl, sends him off to Denmark with a letter of death. Godwine, who opens the letter, changes it for one entrusting the government of Denmark to him and granting him Cnut's sister as wife. At this point Map's account breaks off, leaving us with no knowledge of what the legend had to say of Godwine's later life or death.[1] The story of his humble birth appears also in the *Vita Haroldi*, the *Liber de Hyda*, the chronicle of Ralph Niger, the *Knytlinga saga* and Wace's *Roman de Rou*. The earl was also apparently connected in some way with the betrayal and capture of Alfred at Guildford and with his subsequent death; in some of the chronicles his own sudden death is connected with an attempt to prove his innocence of the deed. It is unfortunate that Map has not given us more of the vernacular saga dealing with the life of Godwine, but it may be that he himself knew nothing more, and was using a written and already mutilated source. If so, it would explain the otherwise puzzling fact that the story of the letter of death breaks off at the same point in the *Vita Haroldi*.

According to the records of the Benedictine monastery of St Swithin's, Winchester, under the year 1338,

> a certain minstrel named Herebert sang the song of Colbrond, and of the deeds of Emma, freed from the ordeal by fire.[2]

The 'song of Colbrond' was doubtless some version of the

[1] Map, *De nugis curialium*, pp. 206 ff.
[2] Warton ii, 97.

story of Guy of Warwick, and the 'deeds of Emma' must have been the famous tale of Queen Emma and the ploughshares. The story first appears in an unprinted chronicle by Richard of Devizes (C.C.C.C. 339), and is found in many later chronicles, including the *Annales de Wintonia,* Robert of Gloucester, Higden, Richard of Cirencester, &c. It tells how Emma, mother of the Confessor, is accused by Archbishop Robert of Canterbury of adultery with Aylwin, bishop of Winchester. She is imprisoned, butmanages to communicate with her friends, and suggests an ordeal to prove her innocence. She is allowed to undergo the ordeal of the nine red-hot ploughshares, and on the appointed day does so victoriously in the presence of the king and the assembled magnates. A similar story appears in the Middle English romance *Athelston,* though what may be the exact relationship—if any—between the two stories is impossible to decide. Nor can we be certain that the song of the dikers and delvers in *Piers Plowman,* 'Deu vous save, Dame Emme', refers to this story, though it is probable enough.

The last of the Saxon kings also had stories connected with his name, the most famous of which told how he survived Hastings and lived for a long time as a hermit at Chester. Ailred of Rievaulx has heard the story, or at any rate knows of a rumour which told of the king's escape from the battle.[1] Giraldus Cambrensis also knew the story and gives a good deal of further information:

> It is also asserted that the remains of Harold are deposited (at Chester). He was the last of the Saxon kings of England, and, as a punishment for his perjury, was defeated in the battle fought against the Normans at Hastings. Having received many wounds, and lost his left eye By an arrow in that engagement, he is said to have escaped to these parts, where, in holy conversation, leading the life of an anchorite, and being a constant attendant at one of the

[1] R. Twysden, *Hijtoriae Anglicanae Scriptores X* (London 1652), P- 394.

churches of this city, he is believed to have ended his life happily. The truth of (this) circumstance was declared (and not known before) in (his) dying confession.[1]

In the 14th century the whole story was elaborated into the *Vita Haroldiy* apparently written with the object of proving that Harold's body was not buried at Waltham. Later chroniclers such as Higden, Knighton and Bromton not only know the story—as they might well do from earlier historians—but add details of their own. Indeed so firmly fixed had it become that the *Brut y Tywysogion,* under the year 1332, records with much circumstantial detail the discovery of Harold's body in St John's, Chester:

After the kalends of May the body of Harold king of England was found in St John's church, Chester, having been buried more than 200 years before, and his body was found with his crown and his robes and his leather hose and his golden spurs, as entire and as well odoured as on the day when they were buried.[2]

No attempt has been made to give here a complete list of all the stories based on Anglo-Saxon history which were current during the period. These are only a selection of those for which we have the most evidence in later writings. It is certain enough that there were others concerning which we have only the vaguest references, and many of which may have been of strictly local currency. There were certainly stories connected with Ceadwalla, Guthfrith of Northumbria, Eric Bloodaxe, Swegen, and Siward of Northumbria, to name only a few of them. Nor can we ever know how many of these legends achieved a written existence in the vernacular. For some we have odd scraps of evidence to suggest that later writers are drawing on written sources. For most we have no evidence one way or another; and although it is probable that many of them were current only orally, it is possible that others formed the subjects of written works in the vernacular of which all trace has since been lost.

[1] *Itinerarium Kambriæ,* p. 140.
[3] Ed. T. Jones (Cardiff 1941), pp. 237-8.

III

CHRISTIAN EPIC

IN all probability a much greater proportion of the Christian poetry has survived than of the heroic or historical narrative. In contrast with these the Christian poetry was essentially a written rather than an oral literature, and once written down there was every reason why such religious epics should be preserved in the monasteries. They would still be subject to the accidents of time, more especially during the later Middle Ages when they were no longer intelligible. However, the natural conservatism of the monastic institutions would help to prolong the existence of the manuscripts. Certainly, despite accidents, a written literature such as this would start off with an infinitely better chance of survival than would one which was mainly oral.

Yet even in this type of poetry there is evidence that a good deal has disappeared. For our knowledge of it we are mainly dependent on the chance survival of three codices, the *Exeter Book,* the *Vercelli Book,* and the *Junius Manuscript.* These are all collections of religious verse made at approximately the same date, and, although it is only fair to say that the contents of the various manuscripts appear to have been selected on slightly different principles, even so there is extraordinarily little repetition. A poem on *Daniel* in the *Junius Manuscript* runs parallel with one on *Azarias* in the *Exeter Book,* whilst the latter and the *Vercelli Book* each contain a poem on the *Debate of the Soul and the Body.* The whole corpus of religious verse available at the end of the 10th

century must have been very large to make it possible for three such collections to be written down with so little overlapping. Of course it is impossible to prove that the three manuscripts have no connexion at all. One of them may originally have been written for an owner who already possessed one of the others, and so repetition may deliberately have been avoided. But in what little we know of the history of the manuscripts there is nothing to indicate any such connexion, and their writing and form make it clear that they were not originally the three volumes of one collection which have since been separated.

Moreover, apart from the contents of these manuscripts, there are extant in Old English about a score of pieces of religious and moral poetry preserved in various ways. In only two instances are pieces thus preserved which are also in the codices. The inscription on the Ruthwell Cross gives lines which occur, in a slightly different form, in the Vercelli *Dream of the Rood,* and a riddle in a Leyden manuscript appears also in the *Exeter Book.* On the whole it would seem that a very large amount of religious verse must have existed in Old English, and therefore that only a small proportion has survived.

Such a conclusion is confirmed by evidence of a somewhat different type. According to Bede the earliest writer of Christianized epics was a certain Cædmon, a monk of Whitby, who received the gift of song by divine inspiration. Bede tells the story in some detail, and also gives some indication of the subjects of Caedmon's poetry:

> He sang the creation of the world, the origin of man, and all the history of Genesis; and made many verses on the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and their entrance into the Promised Land, with many other stories from holy writ: the incarnation, passion, resurrection of our Lord, and his ascension into heaven; the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the apostles; also the terror of future judgment, the horror of the pains of hell,

and the delights of heaven; beside many more about the divine benefits and judgments.[1]

Bede was a trained and conscientious historian, living not far from Cædmon's monastery of Whitby, and we may therefore take it for granted that the poet actually did compose verses on these subjects. Now the extant Bodl. MS. Junius xi contains poems on *Genesis, Exodus, Daniel,* the *Temptation,* the *Ascension* and the *Last Judgment.* Such a list reminds one strongly of the subjects which Cædmon is said to have dealt with, and it is not surprising that earlier scholars should have regarded these poems as his authentic works. Later research, however, has shown conclusively that the manuscript is of composite authorship, and in addition it seems likely that only part of the *Genesis* and a part of the *Exodus* could have been composed early enough for Cædmon to be their author. These two are almost certainly by different authors, so that of the works mentioned by Bede only one is even possibly extant—and there is no real proof of it. It is, of course, possible that other poems in the manuscript are ultimately based on earlier works by Cædmon; if so, they must have differed considerably from them in metre and language, if not in treatment. Consequently of the earliest and, according to Bede, the greatest of the Christian poets, the only work that certainly still survives is his *Hymn to the Creation.* Bede himself gives only a Latin translation of this, but an English version of it has been inserted by scribes in some of the early manuscripts of the *Ecclesiastical History.* This English version, in the Northumbrian dialect, gives the sense of Bede's Latin accurately enough, and we have no reason to doubt its authenticity.

[1] C. Plummer, *Bedae Opera Historica* (Oxford 1896) i, 260. Although Bede considered that Cædmon was the first and the greatest, he makes it clear that he was not the only writer of Christian poetry in the vernacular. But of these we know nothing whatever.

Whilst Cædmon was at work in the north Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne, was beginning a similar school of vernacular Christian poetry in the south. Florence of Worcester mentions his fame as a poet,[1] and William of Malmesburyv on the authority of the lost *Handbook,* tells us that Alfred considered Aldhelm to have been the greatest of the Old English Christian poets. He also gives the reason why the bishop began to compose this kind of poetry. Apparently his barbarous flock was accustomed to leave for home as soon as mass had been celebrated without waiting for the sermon. The holy man, disguised as a minstrel, stationed himself at a bridge which they had to pass. When, after more than one performance, he had made himself popular, he gradually began to mingle 'words of scripture amid the more entertaining matter'.[2] Many of the Latin works of Aldhelm still remain, and adaptations of some of his Latin Riddles into Old English are preserved in the *Exeter Book.* Whether the translator was Aldhelm or not we have no means of knowing, but even so these could hardly be the Christian poems of which Alfred speaks. It is possible that some of the extant anonymous religious poetry may be the work of Aldhelm, or may perhaps be based on his work, though there is no indication that such is the case. On the whole it would appear that none of his poetry is now extant,—this despite Alfred's commendation and the fact that, according to Malmesbury, at least one of his poems had survived in popular memory for five hundred years, and was still remembered by the country people during the 12th century.

Undoubtedly the greatest scholar of the Old English period was the Venerable Bede. In addition he was probably the first writer of Old English prose and a skilful poet in the vernacular. But we hear of his poetry only because it is mentioned in an account of his death written by his disciple

[1] Florence of Worcester i, 237.
[2] *Gesta Pontificum,* p. 336.

Cuthbert. In the course of it he tells how Bede composed on his deathbed,

in our own language, since he was skilled in our poetry, speaking of the terrible parting of the soul and the body,

Fore them neidfaerae naenig uuiurthit
thoncsnotturra than him tharf sie,
to ymbhycgannae, aer his hiniongae,
huaet his gastae, godaes aeththa yflaes,
aefter deothdaege doemid uueorthae.[1]

There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of this account in which has been preserved all that survives of Bede's poetry in the vernacular. Presumably it was not the only poetry which he had composed, and it is a safe assumption that any poetry written by Bede was decidedly Christian in subject. As it is we are left with these five lines alone, and the strong presumption that they form only a very small part of his poetic compositions in Old English.

Alfred the Great is known to have been deeply interested in Old English poetry, and is even said by Florence of Worcester to have been himself a skilled poet in the vernacular.[2] The evidence is late, and Florence gives no authority for 'his statement, but it is possible that some of Alfred's poetry still survives. At the end of his version of Boethius, there is to be found a translation into Old English verse of the *Metres* of the original. Whether this is by Alfred is still debated, but the author of it certainly appears to identify himself with the translator of the prose, and Alfred's authorship of the latter has never been questioned.

We have here then two writers whom later tradition considered to have been the greatest of the Old English Christian poets, and two others who are said to have been skilled in the composition of vernacular poetry. Only eight lines of the

[1] C. Plummer, *op. cit.* i, clxi; A. H. Smith, *Three Northumbrian Poems* (London 1933), PP- 42 ff.

[2] Florence of Worcester i, 273.

works of Cædmon remain, and none of Aldhelm; Bede is represented by five lines only, and, whilst it is possible that rather more of Alfred's verse has survived, we have no reason to suppose that the *Metres,* even if by him, represent his entire output of Christian verse.

Such evidence as this makes it fairly certain that a good deal of the Christian poetry has disappeared. But when we come to consider the subjects and titles of this lost poetry we are as much in the dark as ever. We know something of Cædmon's subjects, nothing of those of Aldhelm or Bede. Ælfric refers to a poem on Judith, probably identical with the fragment which still survives,[1] and elsewhere he mentions a poem on St Thomas (v.i.), but these are the only subjects alluded to. The narrative and heroic poetry may have had comparatively little chance of a written existence, but it could survive in popular memory long enough for reminiscences of it to appear in later Latin writers. The Christian epic, on the other hand, might achieve a written existence, but after the Old English period it survived only in monastic libraries, there to be forgotten and destroyed as it became unintelligible.

[1] C. W. M. Grein, *Bibliothek der Angehdchsischen Prosa* (Cassell 1872)1, ii.

IV

OLD ENGLISH PROSE

DESPITE the probable survival of a comparatively large proportion of the didactic and religious prose there is evidence for the loss of a good deal of such literature, though whether its survival would have proved of much interest or value is more doubtful. One of the earliest Anglo-Saxon scholars was a certain Tobias who, c. 697, succeeded Gebmund as bishop of Rochester. According to Bede he was learned in Latin, Greek and Anglo-Saxon, though this probably means no more than that Tobias was well-versed in the ancient songs of the Anglo-Saxons. So far as we can tell Bede was the first writer of English prose, and it is in Northumbria that English prose has its beginnings.[1] Bede himself tells us that he had translated the Lord's Prayer into the vernacular, and his disciple Cuthbert describes how, even on his deathbed, the saint was busy with the translation of part of St John's Gospel and of extracts from Isidore of Seville.[2] None of Bede's prose writings in the vernacular has survived, and if any of his followers carried on the tradition of translation from Latin into English their work too has been lost.

English prose in Northumbria was apparently still-born. Certainly it did not survive the Viking invasions. When Alfred decided to attempt the re-education of his people he

[1] Apart, of course, from the Kentish Laws of Æthelberht, Hlothhere, and Wihtred. But these are found only in the *Textus Roffensis* and it is impossible to say to what extent the extant version represent the 7th-century originals.

[2] C. Plummet, *op.cit.i*, 296, 409, clxii.

had to start again from the very beginning, and apparently knew nothing of Bede's pioneer work. Although most of Alfred's translations are probably still extant it is not surprising to find that other works, now lost, have been attributed to him, though the evidence is usually slight or non-existent. The best case can be made out for the *Handbook*, the origin of which is described at length by Asser. He tells how, one day, he read to the king a passage out of a certain book. It caught the king's fancy, and he asked the bishop to write it down in a book containing psalms and prayers which he carried about with him. Since the book was already full Asser obtained a fresh sheet on which he wrote the extract, following it on succeeding days with other extracts until the sheet was full. These passages the king translated into English, and learned also other extracts collected from various authors. These he reduced into a single book which gradually increased to the size of a psalter, and which he called his *Manual* or *Handbook*. It seems to have been extant as late as the 12th century when William of Malmesbury includes it amongst the works of Alfred. Moreover, he appears to have used it extensively in his account of Aldhelm, citing it as evidence for the exact relationship of Aldhem's father to Ine, for the Old English form of Malmesbury, and for the statement that Alfred considered Aldhelm to have been the greatest of the Old English religious poets. There can be little doubt that this was a genuine work by Alfred, which has since been lost.

Most of the other ascriptions are probably due merely to a desire to credit Alfred with some Old English work known to the writer. This is perhaps the reason why William of Malmesbury represents him as having begun a translation of the Psalter just before his death.[1] Ailred of Rievaulx also

[1] *Asser*, pp. 73. ff; *Gesta Pontificum*, pp. 333, 336; *Gesta Regum* i, 132. But J. Bromwich, in *The Early Cultures of North-West Europe* (Cambridge 1950), pp. 290 ff., would ascribe the prose portion of the *Paris Psalter* to Alfred.

ascribes to Alfred the translation of parts of the Scriptures, but without particularizing,[1] whilst the 12th-century chronicler of Ely had no doubt whatever that the king had translated into English the whole of the Old and New Testaments.[2] Presumably these writers are here ascribing to Alfred the extant Old English versions of the Gospels.

Collections of proverbs have also been attributed to Alfred. Ailred of Rievaulx knew of one, and so did the annalist of Winchester.[3] Whether such ascriptions indicate that the writers have come across copies of the Middle English collection ascribed to Alfred, whether they are simply depending on the tradition of his wisdom, or whether Alfred actually did compile a collection of English proverbs, it is impossible to say, though the last is unlikely. Certainly the ascription to Alfred of the extant *Proverbs of Alured,* and of numerous single proverbs in different Middle English works, seems to be due merely to the memory of his wisdom.

In the 12th century Marie de France ascribed to Alfred a collection of fables which she claimed to have translated from English into French, at the request of a certain Count William.[4] A similar attribution is to be found in a collection of Latin fables, preserved in the 14th-century MS. Royal 15 A vii, which is closely connected with the French version by Marie de France. The prologue tells how they were first written in Greek by Aesop, translated into Latin by the Emperor Romulus, and into English by *rex angtie affrus*[5] obviously identical with the *rets Alurez* of Marie de France,— and in fact it is not unlikely that the Latin collection has

[1] R. Twysden, *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores* (London 1652), col. 355.

[2] *Liber Eliensis,* p. 81.

[3] R. Twysden, *op.cit.,* col. 355; *Annales de Wintania* (RS. 36, ii, 10).

[4] *K.Wsanke,DieFabelnderMarie deFrance* (Halle 1898), p. 327 ff.

[6] H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Dept. of MSS. in the British Museum* (London 1893) ii, 288 ff.

borrowed the ascription from Marie. There is no reason to doubt that Marie actually did translate from an English original, and it is possible enough that the author may have been called Alfred, but it is unlikely that he is to be identified with the king. In all probability the *Fables* were a Middle English compilation by some obscure Alfred whom later scribes confused with his more famous namesake.[1]

Florence of Worcester, in a discussion of the genealogy of the West Saxon kings, brings forward in support of one of his statements the evidence of the *dicta JElfredi*.[2] Similarly the 12th-century writer of a note in the margin of a Cambridge manuscript of the *Liber Pontificate* appeals to the same authority for some of his statements.[3] Exactly what work the writer had in mind it is impossible to say. Perhaps Alfred's *Handbook* included scraps of historical information as well as religious instruction; and, since we know from other sources that this work was certainly in existence during the I2th century, it may have been the origin of the information given here. If not, the quotations can only refer to some historical work, whether by Alfred or not, all other trace of which has long since vanished.

Alfred is also said to have been the author of a book on falconry, apparently on the sole authority of an entry in the 14th-century catalogue of the library of Christ Church, Canterbury. Item no. 496 of the catalogue drawn up by Henry of Eastry (c. 1330), along with various medical treatises, included also the *Liber Aluredi Regis custodiendis accipitribus*.[4] We know from Asser that Alfred was a keen huntsman, and, though it is likely enough that such a subject

[1] This lost English collection of fables probably provided the text, and perhaps the model, for the illustrations of a series of fables which forms part of the design of the Bayeux Tapestry. See *Romania* Ix, 1-35, 153-94.

[2] Florence of Worcester i, 272. [3] *Neues Archiv d. G.* xxxv, 424.

[4] *Canterbury and Dover,* p. 60.

would have interested him, at this date the ascription could only be traditional. Nor is there anything to show that the treatise was in English, as it certainly would have been if Alfred had written it. Nevertheless it is tempting to connect this entry with the *libri Haroldi*, mentioned as an authority on the same subject in a manuscript, written c. 1200 and preserved in the Nationalbibliothek at Vienna, of the *De Avibus Tractatus*—a treatise probably by Adelard of Bath.[1] The Harold referred to was presumably Harold Godwinesson whom we know from the Bayeux Tapestry to have been a keen falconer. If he possessed books on the subject, they would almost certainly have been in English. In consequence it would have been natural enough for the name of King Alfred to have later become attached to them, whether correctly or not. However, a connexion between the two notices, though possible, is not very probable. Nor is it likely that either of them had anything to do with another book on hawks by King Henry of England, mentioned by Daude de Pradas a contemporary of the Emperor Frederick II. If the Henry referred to be Henry I, it is barely possible that the book may have been in English. But more probably Henry of Anjou is intended, in which case the 'reference is apparently to a lost work in Proven9al, whether prepared under the king's direction or merely dedicated to him does not appear'.[2]

For the next work attributed to Alfred there is only the very doubtful evidence of the pseudo-Ingulph. In his description of the Doomsday survey the author goes on to affirm that a similar inquest had been carried out by Alfred, and the official documents concerning it were still to be seen at Winchester.[3] Historically, of course, there is nothing to be said for such a story. Most probably the author has simply

[1] *EHR.* xxxvii, 398 ff. [2] *'EHR.* xxxvi, 347.

[2] W. Fulman, *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptanm Vetentm* (Oxford 1684) i, 79.

invented it, though he may perhaps have seen some of the separate returns from which Doomsday was compiled and taken these to be the remnants of a much earlier survey. Whatever the explanation we can be certain that no such work was carried out by Alfred. A revision of the laws of Ine was carried out by that king, and still exists. Geoffrey of Monmouth and the annalist of Winchester mention Alfred's *Laws,* along with others of his works, though whether they are referring to this extant code, to other codes which they have mistakenly connected with him, or are simply depending on tradition is impossible to decide.[1]

It is clear that, in addition to the works actually written by the king, quite a number of other writings have, at various times, been attributed to him. The evidence in favour of such attribution varies with the different works, but is only really strong so far as the *Handbook* is concerned. We are justified in regarding this as a genuine lost work of the king, and various indications concerning its contents suggest that it may have been a much more interesting work than would have been expected from the title, or from Asser's account of its inception. It is unlikely that any of the other titles represents a genuine work by Alfred. Some of them are probably much later productions which owe their alleged authorship to the memory of Alfred's achievements, while others may not even refer to actual works at all but may only be some writer's opinion of what the king might or should have written.

Apart from the translations made by Alfred there appear to have been extant in Old English other translations of Latin writings which are now lost but which were still in existence as late as the 12th century. In one of his works Giraldus mentions the 'English works of Bede, of Rabanus, and of King Alfred',[2] all of which, he says, were written in the West Saxon

[1] E. Faral, *op.cit.* iii, 113, 120; *Annales de Wintonia* (RS. 36, ii, 10).

[2] *Descriptio Kambrise,* p. 178.

dialect. The English works of Alfred we know, and it is unlikely that Giraldus knew anything of the genuine English works of Bede; in all probability he is merely referring to the Alfredian translation of the *Ecclesiastical History*. But nothing is known of any English versions of the works of Hrabanus. The only important author of that name was Hrabanus Maurus, archbishop of Mainz and one of the most important of the pupils of Aleuin. He was a voluminous Latin writer and one of the most famous theologians of his time. The reference here, and its connexion with Alfred's works, suggests that some of Hrabanus' works may have been translated into English, and possibly by one or other of the scholars inspired by Alfred. Such a fact would not be surprising. It would surely have been remarkable had Werfrith been the only one of Alfred's bishops to respond to the king's appeal for translators. We can only make a guess at which of Hrabanus' works may have been so translated; many of them could usefully have been, his educational treatises or his encyclopaedic *De Universo*, though perhaps the most likely is the *De Insttiutione Clericorum*. All this is mere guesswork. But the evidence of Giraldus is clear enough and, whoever the Rabanus in question may have been, it is certain that no Old English versions of his works have survived.

It is unlikely that any of the works of Ælfric have been lost. The frequent references which he himself makes to various of his works cannot Always be definitely identified; but it is usually possible to make a fairly certain guess at the work of which he is thinking, and when this proves difficult it is merely because of the vagueness of the reference. More suggestive is the reason which Ælfric gives for writing in English:

> I saw and heard much error in many English books, which ignorant men because of their innocence accounted to be of much wisdom; and I had pity on them that they knew not and had not the teaching of the gospel in their writings, except for those men

alone who knew Latin, and except for the books which King Alfred wisely translated from Latin into English, which are to be had.[1]

This surely indicates the loss of a great many religious works in Old English. Before the time of *Ælfric* the only religious works in English of which we know are those of Alfred, the translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* by Werfrith, and the B*lickling Homilies.* Now Ælfric expressly excepts the works of Alfred, and presumably he would include Werfrith's work with these; so that we are left with the B*lickling Homilies*, in which, so far as we can tell, there is little to merit *Ælfric's* reprobation. Unless he is referring to some of the Old English Christian poems, which is perhaps a possibility, the period between Alfred and Ælfric must have produced a number of popular religious works in which the orthodox theologians found something suspicious. It is not surprising that such works should have perished; the ecclesiastics of the later period would see to it that they were replaced by the works of Æfric.

After the time of Ælfric and Wulfstan there is little direct evidence for the existence of any great quantity of religious or didactic prose which has since been lost, but the indirect evidence is strong enough. It seems likely that an earlier Old English translation existed of parts or the whole of the medical works of Alexander of Tralles;[2] and although, during the reigns of Cnut and the Confessor, the volume of extant English prose is small, 'there are laws, letters and charters, and under the Confessor we find evidence of many writers of great ability. Sometimes we have only two or three pages extant of each, sometimes less',[3] but it is obvious enough that these few extant pages do not comprise the entire output of such authors.

[1] B. Thorpe, *The Homilies of Ælfric* (London 1844) i, *2.*
[2] G. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague 1948), pp. 19, 21, *23.*
[3] *Continuity of English Prose,* p. Ixviii.

In historical writing there is little evidence for the loss of anything of importance. Many manuscripts of the *Chronicle* have certainly been lost, and no doubt some of them may have contained occasional valuable details, but on the whole it is unlikely that they included much which is not to be found in one or other of the extant manuscripts. Gaimar mentions a Winchester chronicle as one of his sources. This was probably the extant Parker manuscript, but it could have been the lost chronicle now represented only by the annals for the years 1113 and 1114, or a version of which no other trace remains. Elsewhere he includes, among his sources 'in Latin, French and English', *le liuere Walter Espac, le bon liuere de Oxeford,* the *estorie de Wincestre,* and *de Wassingburc vn liuere Engleis.* The first of these was clearly a copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth, whilst the *estorie de Wincestre* was presumably the version of the Chronicle mentioned above. *Le bon liuere de Oxeford* and the *liuere Engleis de Wassingburc* are more difficult to identify. The former may be connected with the alleged British book, borrowed from Archdeacon Walter of Oxford, which Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed as his source. However scholars have been inclined to question the existence of any such work, and it is difficult to believe that a British book would have been of any use to Gaimar. The latter work was apparently connected with the present unimportant village of Washingborough in Kesteven, and its contents must remain uncertain. A copy of the *Chronicle* or an Old English version of Orosius or Bede are possibilities, though the reason for such a description would not be very clear. In any case we may take it for granted that Gaimar did use as one of his sources some lost historical work which, for a reason now unknown, was connected with an unimportant village in Kesteven.[1]

A fair number of Old English books appear in the extant 12th-century catalogues of monastic libraries. Such

[1] Gaimar i, 93, 275.

catalogues, however, are often fragmentary, and it is only rarely that their English items sound at all interesting. The fragmentary 12th-century catalogue of Rochester shows

> Pastoralis anglicus in uno volumine . . .
> Sermonalia anglica in duobus voluminibus . . .

The first of these is underlined and may already have been lost when the catalogue was drawn up. While it is not known to exist today, and does not appear in the catalogue drawn up in 1202, it must have been a copy of Alfred's translation of the *Cura Pastoralis*. The two volumes of homilies are the present Bodl. 340 and 342,[1] and duly reappear in the later catalogue, which includes also a *Medicinale anglicum*. This appears to have been lost, but was presumably simply another version of one or other of the late Old English medical works printed by Cockayne.[2]

The early 12th-century catalogue of Peterborough again shows only two English works:

54. Vite sanctorum anglice . . .
65. Elfredi regis liber anglicus . . .[3]

The first was presumably a copy, which does not seem to have survived, of Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*. The second, if it were one of Alfred's translations, has also been lost, but it may have been the *Peterborough Chronicle*, which otherwise finds no place in the catalogue. The library of the Benedictine abbey at Burton-on-Trent seems to have contained a comparatively large number of works in English when the extant catalogue was drawn up c. 1175:

71. Omeliarium anglicum.
72. Psalterium anglicum.
73. Passionale anglicum.

---

[1] For these and other identifications see N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (London 1941), *passim*.
[2] *Archaeologia Cantiana* vi, 120 ff.; iii, 54 ff.
[3] *Trans. Bib. Soc.*, Supplement v, p. 28.

74. Dialogum Gregoriiet historiam Anglorum, anglice.
75. Apollonium, anglice.
76. Evangelistas, anglice.
77. Ymnarium, anglice.[1]

Although none of these manuscripts appears to have survived, other copies of most of the works are known, and some of these, which show no signs of provenance, may be the ones catalogued here. Few of the items are of any interest. Volumes of Old English homilies are not infrequent, and it is unlikely that the one mentioned here contained anything of particular interest. Similarly with the English versions of the *Psalter*, the *Gospels* and the *Passional;* their interest, if any, would have been linguistic rather than literary. Extant copies are available of the translation of the *Dialogues,* as also of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History.* The *Hymnary* might have been, and the version of *Apollonius of Tyre* probably would have been, interesting. The latter is extant in a single incomplete manuscript (C.C.C.C. 201), of which the provenance is unknown; but since it seems impossible to connect this manuscript with Burton, it is likely that the Burton manuscript (which may have contained a more complete version of the work) is now lost.

When a catalogue of the library of Durham Cathedral was drawn up early in the I2th century the following English works were to be found there:

Libri Anglici. Omeliaria vetera duo. Unum novum. Elfledes Boc. Historia Anglorum Anglice. Liber Paulini Anglicus. Liber de Nativitate Sanctae Mariae Anglicus. Cronica duo Anglica.[2]

C.U.L. Gg. 3. 28, a loth- or nth-century manuscript from Durham containing some of the homilies of Ælfric, is probably one of the three volumes of homilies noted here, but nothing is known of the other two. The *Elfledes Boc* looks

[1] *Centralblatt fUr Bibliotkekswesen* ix, 201-2.
[2] *SS.* vii, 5 ff.

interesting. No indication is given as to whom this Elfled may have been, though a Lady Elfleda, daughter of Offa and wife of ,Æthelred of Northumbria—possibly the same person as the *Ælfiæd* referred to in the Lindisfarne *Liber Vitae*—is mentioned by Symeon of Durham, s.a. 792. If this be the Elfled in question the book was presumably a gift by her to the cathedral library, and no guess can be made at its contents. However we hear of another Elfled in connexion with Durham. When the tomb of St Cuthbert was opened in 1827 there were found in the coffin an embroidered stole, a maniple, a girdle, and two golden bracelets. On the reverses of the end of the stole and maniple, in the style of the loth-century Winchester school, was embroidered AELFLAED FIERI PRECEPIT plo EPISCOPO FRIDESTANO. Frithestan was bishop of Winchester from 909 to 931, and the stole may have come into the hands of Athelstan on the death of the bishop. If so, it may be identical with the *unam stolam cum manipulo* mentioned amongst the donations of Athelstan to the shrine of St Cuthbert during his northern expeditions in 934 and 937. The identity of the names suggests that *Elfledes Boc* may also have been one of the gifts of Athelstan to St Cuthbert. Along with the stole and maniple he is said to have presented a missal, two texts of the gospels, and a life of St Cuthbert in prose and verse.[1] The last of these is probably identical with the extant C.C.C.C. 183, which is in Latin. One of the manuscripts of the gospels was destroyed in the Cottonian fire; but, since it is said to have been written in France, it could hardly have been the English work mentioned here. Consequently, if *Elfledes Boc* was one of the gifts of Athelstan, and if we have a complete list of his donations—both only doubtful possibilities—then presumably the work in question was an English version of the gospels, though we know of none in existence so early as this. As for the Elfled in question

[1] W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum* (London 1885-93), no. 685.

it may be significant that this was the name of Athelstan's stepmother.

The *Historia Anglorum Anglice* was presumably merely a copy of the Alfredian translation of Bede, but a more interesting work may have been the *Liber Paulini Anglicus*. The only Paulinus of whom we know in connexion with Northumbria was the missionary of that name. If he be the man referred to, the book may have been merely a collection of extracts from Bede. There is no record that Paulinus himself ever wrote any books, much less any English books, though he presumably spoke the language. Perhaps the book may have been some kind of elementary religious instruction written for the benefit of his new converts, or, more probably, some English book which was traditionally connected with him. The only other writers of the name now known are Paulinus of Nola and Paulinus of Aquileia. The life and martyrdom of St Felix of Nola, written in verse by the former, had been turned into prose by Bede, and this may perhaps have been an English version of Bede's work.

The *Cronica duo Anglica* were probably copies of the *Old English Chronicle*. None of the extant manuscripts is known to have been written in the North, but the northern material incorporated in them indicates that versions of the *Chronicle* were in use there. Moreover, Symeon of Durham, writing in the first quarter of the 12th century, uses a form of the *Chronicle* intimately related to the ancestor of E.

When later catalogues of Durham Cathedral library were drawn up in 1391 and 1416, all these English books seem to have been already lost. In them the only books given as in English are:

Regula Sancti Benedict! in Latino, et eadem Regula in Anglico. ii fo., Psalterium petri' . . .
Donatus Anglice. ii fo., i de'or hoc milite' . . .[1]

[1] SS.vii, 30, 33, 107, 111

Versions of the Old English translation of the rule of St Benedict still exist; and the second work is the extant St John's College, Oxford, 154, a copy of Ælfric's *Grammar and Glossary,* the second folio of which begins ô*eos boc mihte.*

A fragmentary catalogue of the library of Christ Church, Canterbury, written c. 1170, contains only a single book in English, item 27 being entered as *Donatus Anglice,* presumably a version of Ælfric's *Grammar.* But the library must have possessed many other Old English books, since the catalogue drawn up by Prior Henry of Eastry (c. 1330) shows at least nineteen manuscripts containing Old English writings, a comparatively large proportion still being extant. Of these item 296 is the extant Cotton Tiberius B iii, but item 297, which contained the following Old English works, does not appear to have survived:

Expositiones de Prisciano exposite Anglice.
Locutio latina glosata Anglice ad instruendos pueros . . .
Regula beati Benedicti glosata, Anglice . . .
Consuetudines de faciendo seruicio diuino per annum, glosate Anglice.

None of these is of any great interest. The first two pieces were presumably versions of Ælfric's *Grammar* and *Colloquy,* and manuscripts of the Old English versiofi of the rule of St Benedict are still extant. The last item may have been an Old English version of Amalarius *De ecclesiasticis officiis,* which was extremely popular in England. It was well known to ÆElfric and Athelwold, who both mention it, while Ælfric also translates passages from the book.

Much more interesting are items 304-320 in the same catalogue:

Libri Anglici.
304. Genesis Anglice depicta. (Bodl. Junius xi.)
305. Liber Passionum et Sermones Anglice.
306. Dialogus beati Gregorii.
307. Boeicius de consolatione.

308. Herbarius Anglice depictus. (Cotton Vitellius C iii.)
309. Liber sermonum catholicorum Anglice.
310. Liber sermonum beati Augustini, a.
311. Cronica uetustissima, a. (C.C.C.C. 173.)
312. Liber de ordine monastico, a.
313. Cronica secundum Bedam, a.
314. Textus iv Euangeliorum, Anglice. (Royal l A xiv.)
315. Actus Apostolorum, Anglice.
316. Liber Sermonum, Anglice.
317. Regula Canonicorum, a.
318. Cronica Latine et Anglice. (Cotton Domitian A viii.)
319. Liber Edwini, a.
320. Excepciones de Prisciano, a.[1]

Five of these still survive. Of the others, 305 cannot now be identified but appears to have been simply a collection of homilies, as also were 309—probably by Ælfric—and 316. 306 was presumably Werfrith's translation of the *Dialogues*, extant in other manuscripts, and 307 a copy of Alfred's translation of Boethius. Nothing is known of any translation of the sermons of St Augustine (310), though the title may only represent a lost manuscript of Alfred's *Blooms*. 312 was probably a customary, since lost, while the Old English version of Bede has been indentified, apparently wrongly, with C.U.L. Kk. 3. 18. No Old English version of the *Acts* is now known; the *Regula canonicorum* was probably the Old English version of the rule of Chrodegang of Mete, and the *Liber Edwini* was presumably one of the works of the early 12th-century scribe Eadwine whose *Bible* and *Psalter* occur later in the catalogue, the second of these being the famous *Canterbury Psalter*. The last item was presumably nothing more than a copy of Ælfric's *Grammar*.

It is unfortunate that no complete catalogue of the library at Bury has survived. It was one of the oldest and most important of English monasteries, and an examination of the press-marks in the "extant manuscripts suggests that the

[1] *Canterbury and Dover*, pp. 8, 50 ff.

library may have contained over 2,000 volumes. A fragmentary catalogue from the late 12th or early 13th century shows only two works in English:

169. Magnus liber sermonum in anglica lingua . . .
258. Regula beati Benedicti Latine et anglice. (C.C.C. Oxford 197.) [1]

The first of these may be Cotton Julius E vii, which is certainly from Bury and contains some of the works of Ælfric. Another reminder of lost volumes from this library is provided by the discovery on the site of Bury Abbey of 'a leaden tablet inscribed with a portion of one of Ælfric's homilies—probably the front cover of an MS. volume of the Homilies'.[2]

The monastery at Glastonbury might have been expected to be fairly rich in English books, but when the extant catalogue of the library was drawn up in 1247-8 little of interest remained. Amongst the *Diversi libri de bibliotheca* were

Penthateucum Moysy & Josue & Judicum sine glosa. vetust.
Item duo Anglica vetusta et inutilia.

The only historical work in English was a copy of Alfred's translation of Orosius—'old but still legible'. Homiletic literature was rather better represented:

Liber de diversis sermonibus Anglicis.
Item sermones Anglici. vetust. inutil.
Passionate Sanctorum Anglice script. vetust. inutil.
Item quidem liber Anglice.

In addition there was a *Medicinale Anglicwn*. Apparently these were the only English books which still remained in

[1] M. R. James, *On the Abbey of St Edmund at Bury* (Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Communications 1895), pp. 30, 32.
[1] C. Fox, *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (Cambridge 1923), p. 300.

the library. None of them sounds particularly interesting and all seem to have perished.[1]

Equally disappointing is the inventory of the books of the cathedral library of Exeter drawn up in 1327. In view of the donations of Leofric a certain number of Old English books might have been expected. Actually the only ones mentioned are:

> Martirologium Latinum et Anglicum: 'Circumcisio' 020.
> Psalterium interlineare glosatura de Anglico, preen 25.
> Penetentiale vetus et alia plura, cum Anglico in fine. 'In principio'. 12*d.* (C.C.C.C. 190.)

An nth-century *Martyrology* in English, certainly from Exeter, survives (C.C.C.C. 196), but apparently cannot be definitely identified with the one above. Despite the evidence of the catalogue it is certain that there must have been other English manuscripts at Exeter at this time, although they are not recorded in it. An nth-century English version of the Gospels (C.U.L. li. 2. 11), an nth-century copy of the Old English version of the *Ecclesiastical History* (C.C.C.C. 41), and the *Exeter Book* are all certainly from Exeter, yet none of them can be identified with any of the entries in the catalogue. In fact, at the end of it is a brief note to the effect that the library contained also 'many other books, written in French, English and Latin, wasted with age, to which no value is assigned since they are thought to be worth nothing'.[2]

The late 15th-century catalogue of St Augustine's, Canterbury, in addition to some Middle English works, contained one which was certainly, and another which was probably, in Old English:

> 95. Genesis anglic' 2 fo. *and syldus* (Cotton Claudius E iv.)

---

[1] T. W. Williams, *Somerset Mediaeval Libraries* (Somerset Arch. Soc. 1897), PP. 55-78.

[2] G. Oliver, *Lives of the Bishops of Exeter* (Exeter 1861), pp. 301-10.

991. Boecius de consolacione philosophic in Anglicis. 2 fo. *vtterest.*[1]

The second of these, not now known to exist, was presumably a copy of Alfred's translation.

English works are occasionally mentioned in other lists of books, but though the actual manuscript may no longer be extant the work itself is usually well enough known. So, for example, with the list of books given to the cathedral library of Exeter by Bishop Leofric (d. 1072), which contained the following manuscripts in English, the only one which does not appear to have survived being the Boethius:

. . . peos Englisce Cristes-boc (C.U.L. li. 2. n) . . . 7 regula canonicorum (C.C.C.C. 191), 7 martyrlogium (C.C.C.C. 196) . . . 7 scrift boc on Englisc (C.C.C.C .190) . . . 7 Boeties hoc on Englisc, 7. i. mycel Englisc boc be ge-hwilcum pingum on leoowisan geworht (Exeter Cath. 3501) . . .[2]

Towards the end of C.C.C.C. 367 a short list of English books is inserted:

Deo englissce passionale and ii englissce dialogas and oddan boc and *Ipe* englisca martirlogium and ii englisce salteras and ii pastorales englisce and be englisca regol and barontus.

In the same manuscript is preserved a letter from Hubert and Edwius, abbot and prior of Westminster, to the prior of Worcester, so that the manuscript may originally have belonged to the cathedral church there. If so, the library no longer possesses any of the books mentioned. The list is not particularly interesting. The *dialogas* are two copies of the translation by Werfrith, and as the extant copies of this work —Cotton Otho C i and Bodl. Hatton 76—are from Worcester they may be the two referred to here. The Old English *Martyrology* was probably written somewhere in West Mercia,

[1] *Canterbury and Dover,* pp. 201, 302.

[2] R. W. Chambers, R. Flower, M. Färster, *The Exeter Book* (London 1933), PP- 10-32.

but there is no reason to suppose that this copy is to be identified with any of the extant manuscripts. *The pastorales* may be C.C.C.C. 12 and Bodl. Hatton 20. The *regolvras* presumably a copy of the Old English version of the rule of St Benedict or that of Chrodegang of Metz. The title *oddan hoc* is ambiguous; it may indicate that it was once owned by someone of that name, or possibly that the book dealt with a person called Odda. Several people of the name were connected with Worcester, the best known being Odo the Good, archbishop of Canterbury and uncle of St Oswald. Since the book is not said to have been in English, it may perhaps have been the Latin *Vita Odonis* of Eadmer, or the first part of the anonymous *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*. The last item presumably dealt with the vision of St Barontus of Pistoja (6th cent), and may have been in Latin; if in English it has certainly not survived.

A short list of books has been entered in a 12th- or 13th-century hand at the foot of f. 149a of Cotton Otho C i. The manuscript suffered in the Cottonian fire so that the list is now imperfect. One of the books was certainly in English and others may have been:

> Liber dialogorum Gre(gori) . . . Vitas Patrurn. Item Beda de gestis Anglorum anglice. Item Vita . . . Item Synonima Ysydori. Item Beda . . . De Consola(tione) . . ,[1]

The manuscript is a composite one, the first part coming from Malmesbury, the second part—in which the list occurs —from Worcester. The extant C.U. L. Kk. 3. 18, containing an English version of Bede, is from Worcester and may be the book referred to here.

In the 16th century, just before the final dissolution of the monasteries, John Leland was commissioned to visit them and to inspect their libraries with a view to the possible transference of the more important works in them to the

[1] *MLR*. xviii, 257 n. 1.

King's Library. In the course of his journeys he jotted down the title of any interesting book which he came across, and some of these are noted as being in English. At Southwick he notes an Old English version of Bede (Cotton Otho B xi); in the Cambridge University Library was an English version of Boethius; in the library of the Dominicans in the same town was a *Biblia in lingua vernacula.* At Glastonbury he found an *Orosius Saxonice*—probably the copy mentioned in the extant catalogue—and a *Dictionarium Latino-Saxonicum.* Wells possessed an English version of Gregory's *Dialogues* and a volume of Ælfric's homilies, whilst Ælfric's *Grammar* and *Glossary* were noted at Pershore. *Pars veteris testamenti Saxonice* is noted at Abbotsbury, and *Leges aliquot regum Saxonice* at Christchurch (Twinham). More interesting than these is the suggestion of a lost historical work from the Premonstratensian abbey of Tupholme. Leland gives a description of the burial of St Oswald at Bardney taken, he says, 'ex veteri chronico, Anglice scripto', which he found at the abbey. Whether the work was a copy of the *Chronicle* or of some later Middle English work it is impossible to say; at all events it does not appear to have survived. At Ely an interesting note records the presence in the library there of

> A writen booke of a 20. leves founde in an holow stone, kyverid with a stone in digging for a foundation at Yvy cherch by Serisbyri.

With this may be compared Leland's description of a find at Harlaxton, near Grantham:

> a stone, under the wich was a potte of brasse, and an helmet of gold, sette with stones in it, the which was presentid to Catarine Princes Dowager. There were bedes of silver in the potte: and writings corruptid.

Unfortunately in neither case is any information given as to the language of the writings concerned.[1]

[1] J. Leland, *Collectanea,* ed. T. Hearne (London 1774) iv, *passim; Leland* i, 28.

Two Old English versions of the *Gospels* are noted in an inventory of the monastery of Waltham, dated March 24, I54O,[1] whilst Purvey, in a treatise written in 1405, mentions a *Bible* in English:

> Also a man of Loundon, his name was Wyring, hadde a Bible in Englische of northen speche, wiche was seen of many men, and it semed too honndred yeer olde.[2]

This was probably an Old English version, and may have been one of the manuscripts still extant. Tyndale, in his *Obedience of a Christian Man,* claims, 'except my memory fail me', to have seen an account in 'the English Chronicle' of how Athelstan caused the scriptures to be translated into Old English.[3] Probably his memory had failed him, and if he read anything of the kind the king referred to would have been Alfred and not Athelstan.

It is evident enough that a good deal of the didactic and religious literature of the Old English period has been lost, but the available references suggest that comparatively few of such lost works would have been of any particular interest.

[1] *Trans. Royal Society of Literature* (OS.) vi, 203 ff.
[2] M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible* (Cambridge 1920), p. 441.
[3] J. F. Mozley, *William Tyndale* (London 1937), p. 8.

V

SAINTS' LIVES

THROUGHOUT the Middle Ages the lives of the saints provided popular subjects for literature, partly because many of them combined the merits of devotional reading with the attractions of the marvellous. These lives were usually written in Latin, but popular demand, and the attempts of the clergy to provide a substitute for more secular literature, soon led to the composition of versions in the vernacular. Many lives of the saints still exist in both Old and Middle English, but it is natural enough that some should have been lost. Such literature, although free from many of the dangers which threatened the continued existence of more secular works, was not entirely exempt from the ravages of time or from the danger of accident. Osbern of Canterbury writes his life of Dunstan because of the loss of many of their books in a great fire at Christ Church, Canterbury; and the author of the *De Sanctis Ecclesite Haugustaldensis* undertook his task because the library at Hexham, containing numerous lives of the saints, had been completely destroyed by the Danes.[1]

It is especially fitting that the list of lost vernacular lives should open with one of St Alban. Sometime during the second half of the 12th century his life was written in Latin by a certain William of St Albans, who claims to have used an English account of the passion of the saint.[2] Various Old English homilies dealing with the life of St Alban are still

[1] *SS.* xliv, 190. [2] *ASS.* June v, 129.

extant, but it seems certain that none of them can be the source from which William drew, and we must conclude that it has long since been- lost. Actually, if we could trust the monastic chroniclers, it would seem that this is neither the only, nor even the earliest, vernacular life of the saint to have disappeared. In the *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani* there is a long tale of how, in the time of Abbot Eadmer, while various excavations were being carried out, a number of books and rolls were found hidden in a hole in the wall. Most of these contained pagan rites and invocations and were immediately destroyed, only a single volume with the life of St Alban 'written in the English or British language' being preserved. At the command of the abbot this was translated into Latin by a certain learned priest named Unwona and, the translation once completed, the original immediately fell into dust.[1] Despite the circumstantial detail it is difficult to believe in the former existence of a British version of the life of St Alban; the propaganda value of the tale is much too obvious, and the unfortunate disappearance of the original as soon as it had been translated into Latin is much too suspicious. The whole account is reminiscent of the alleged discovery of the body of St Amphibalus at the same monastery in 1178, such a discovery, in the words of the chronicler, 'confirming the account which was handed down from ancient times in the book of his martyrdom'.[2] However, since the saint in question is probably nothing more than a personification of St Alban's cloak, it is difficult to believe that the account was as ancient as the chronicler wished us to assume.

St Helen—another famous saint whom medieval legend connected with England—also appears to have had her life written in an English version which no longer exists. An account of her life, in Latin, was composed during the second half of the 12th century by Jocelyn of Furness, who tells us

[1] *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani* (RS. 28, iv, I, 26).
[2] Roger of Wendpver, *Chronica* (RS. 84, i, 115).

that it is based on an Old English version of the legend, the author of which claims to have translated from the British.[1] We need not, perhaps, take the supposed British original very seriously. In the Middle Ages the English liked to believe that the saint was the daughter of an innkeeper at York, and it was natural enough that the author of the Old English version should attempt to give his work an air of authority by claiming for it an earlier British original. Nevertheless there is no reason to disbelieve Jocelyn's statement that he is using an English life of the saint. A poetic version by Cynewulf, preserved in the *Vercelli Book,* can hardly have been Jocelyn's source, which must long since have disappeared.

One of the more obscure saints of the early period is St Lewinna, said to have been a British virgin put to death by the Saxon invaders during the 5th or 6th century. She was especially venerated at her minster at 'Seevorhd' (possibly Seaford in Sussex), whence her relics were translated in 1058 —without the consent of the owners—to the monastery of St Winnoc at Bergues. An account of the translation was written soon afterwards by Drogo, a monk of St Winnoc, in the course of which he tells of a guide to the merits of the saint, written in English, which was fixed to the walls of the minster at 'Seevorhd'.[2] This guide has, of course, long since disappeared; its interest lies in the fact that it provides an example of a type of writing of which we hear comparatively little, but which may have been much commoner in medieval times than is supposed.[3] Dugdale gives 'the copie of the Table that was hanging in the Priorie of Stone, at time of the Suppression of the same, in the xxix. yeare of the Raigne of our Soveraign Lord King Henry the VIII, which included 162 lines of verse describing the foundation and benefactors of the monastery.[4] In the same priory were to be found the lives

[1] Bodl. 240 (2469), p. 8oIa (H).
[2] Paris, B.N. MS. lat. 5296, p. 243.
[3] See *Speculum* i, 439 ff. [4] *Monasticon* vi, 230.

of St Wulfhad and St Ruffin, containing 382 lines, written or painted upon a table on the epistle side of the choir, and now known only from a transcript in a Cottonian manuscript.[1] An English life of St Wulfstan, comprising 75 stanzas in rhyme royal and an eight line envoy, found in a lyth-century transcript in a Lambeth manuscript, was originally written on parchment and attached to a triptych, probably in Bawburgh Church, Norfolk.[2] In one of the Dodsworth manuscripts in the Bodleian is a catalogue of 43 miracles of St William of York, said to have been copied 'out of a table in the Revestry in the Cathedral Church of York'.[3] Again an inventory of the goods of St George's Chapel, Windsor, made in 1384, includes a wooden table containing the passion of St George.[4] The most famous of such tables, however, was the *magna tabula* at Glastonbury, which 'told in full the stories of St Joseph of Arimathea and of King Arthur, of St Patrick and his Charter, and of the translation of St Dunstan, and much besides'. A description of this *magna tabula* will show how it was possible for such tables to contain a considerable amount of writing, though no doubt the Glastonbury one was more elaborate than most:

> It was a folding wooden frame, 3 ft. 8 in. in height, and 3 ft. 6 in. in breadth when opened flat, containing two wooden leaves somewhat smaller, so that they may fold within the outer case when closed, like the pages of a book. All the six interior faces are covered with MS. written upon parchment affixed to the surface of the wood. There are three pairs of nail holes in the upper, and four pairs in the lower edges of the frame, upon the left hand only. These seem to show that it was affixed to a wall in such a way that it might be opened out as a book. The whole MS. takes up about sixty pages, clearly written, of ordinary exercise book size.[5]

---

[1] G. H. Gerould, *Saints' Legends* (New York 1916), pp. 273-5.
[2] *Proceedings of the Norfolk and Norwich Arch. Soc.* xix, 250.
[3] *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* iii, 210.
[4] *Monasticon* vi, 1364.
[5] J. A. Robinson, *Two Glastonbury Legends* (Cambridge 1926),

Numerous lives of Anglo-Saxon saints are still extant in the vernacular, either individually or in collections, and there are also references to others which have since disappeared. St Oswald of Northumbria was one of the most popular of the native saints, and his life and death are described in some detail by Bede. A later biographer, Reginald of Durham, writing in the middle of the i2th century, claims to have obtained much of his information from English sources. The natural assumption to make is that he is referring to the Old English version of Bede, or perhaps to Ælfric's life of the king, but the statement is preceded by an interesting and detailed description of Oswald's person such as is found neither in Bede nor in Ælfric. The king is said to have been tall, with yellow hair, a long face, bright protruding eyes of bluish-grey, and a very thin beard. His lips were rather thin and wore a kindly smile, while his hands and arms were of great length and strength. This information Reginald had received from a certain Robert, a brother of the hospital at York, who claimed to have derived it from a very old book written in English.[1] The description sounds authentic enough, and there is no reason to disbelieve Robert's statement; but the book used by him is certainly not in existence today.

Thomas of Ely, the 12th-century author of part of the *Liber Eliensis,* made use of English writings, though their nature is not specified more particularly. So, when dealing with the miracles of St Etheldreda he mentions 'a small book containing her life written in English'. Similarly a reference to St Felix, bishop of East Anglia, unmistakably indicates an

pp. 41-2. Of. also the 100 lines of English verse on a table in the hall of St Helen's hospital, Culham, set up in 1457 by Richard Fannand, in honour of the part taken by Geoffrey Barbour in the building of Culham Bridge *(Lelandv,* 113 ff.).

[1] Symeon of Durham i, 378; see also the description of his source for some of the miracles at Bardney (i, 372).

English source for his information, although this source was probably not an English life of the saint. On the other hand, an equally vague reference to St Sexburg almost certainly does refer to a vernacular life. For the author of a Latin life in Cotton Caligula A viii says that he proposes to make a revised edition of the life of the saint, partly from Saxon authorities; and that these included a vernacular life of the saint is shown by the fact that a fragment of it is still extant in MS. Lambeth 427, and has been used by the author of the Latin life. More definite evidence for the existence of a vernacular life, which has since been lost, appears in the case of St Athelwold. Thomas of Ely tells of the existence of this Old English life, and of its translation into Latin at the command of Bishop Harvey, the first bishop of the see of Ely.[1]

Another indefinite account of sources is that given by Faricius (d. 1117), a foreigner who became abbot of Abingdon and who wrote a life of St Aldhelm. His sources included works *barbarice atque Latine*, and he mentions particularly a volume written *lucido stylo*, which was lost or damaged during the Danish invasions. Similarly, when giving a list of the works of Aldhelm, he tells us that the account is taken from an ancient volume still in the library at Malmesbury. It is impossible to say whether Faricius' English sources included a vernacular life of the saint or not. Probably not, since he is hardly likely to have had much knowledge of the language; in fact in the prologue he clearly states that he has utilized the services of an interpreter in dealing with his Old English material.[2] On the whole, the probability is that his vernacular sources were documents such as charters rather than any connected narrative of the saint's life.

One of the greatest of the Anglo-Saxon saints was Dunstan, round whose name legends seem to have gathered at a very

[1] *Liber Eliensis*, pp. 1, 72, 7, 21, 77, 94, 95; cf. Hardy i, 360.

[2] *Patrologia Latina* Ixxxix, 64, 71, 65, and cf. *Gesta Pontificum*, P- 331-

early date. Various Latin lives are extant, and in one of them, that written by Osbern of Canterbury towards the end of the nth century, the author tells of a disastrous fire in the monastery which destroyed a number of saints' lives. In order to supply the deficiency he intends to translate into Latin an English account of the life of Dunstan.[1] Similar statements are found in the life of the same saint by Eadmer, who appears to have borrowed from Osbern, though he may independently have used the Old English work, no longer in existence, which had been translated by the earlier writer.

One of the items in the 13th-century catalogue of the library of Leominster was a *Rotula cum vita sancti Guthlaci anglice scripta*.[2] St Guthlac was a 7th-century hermit of Croyland whose life was written in Latin soon after his death by Felix of Croyland. Various lives in Old and Middle English still survive, but it seems unlikely that any of these can represent the entry here. The three extant Old English versions—the poem in the *Exeter Book* and prose versions in two Cottonian manuscripts—are all in volumes not in rolls, and the three extant manuscripts containing Middle English versions of the life were all copied at a date subsequent to the drawing up of this catalogue. The Leominster roll may be a lost vernacular life of the saint, but more probably it was another copy of one of the extant lives, or perhaps an extract from one of the legendaries.

It is particularly fitting that Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, one of the last supporters of the Old English literary traditions, should have been the last of the Anglo-Saxon saints to have his life written in the vernacular. He died in 1095 and soon after his death his life was written in English by his chaplain Colman. However, the knowledge of Old English at Worcester must have been rapidly dying out, and when William of Malmesbury visited the monastery in the early

[1] *Patrologia Latina* cxxxvii, 413 ff. [2] *EHR*. iii, 124.

years of the 12th century he was asked by the monks to translate Colman's work into Latin. It is to this translation which, according to Malmesbury, closely follows the Old English original that we owe our knowledge of Colman's life of the saint. The latter was still in existence at the beginning of the 13th century when negotiations were in progress for the canonization of Wulfstan. The papal delegates, in addition to satisfying themselves about the genuineness of certain miracles which were reported to have been worked by the saint, arranged that there should be sent to the Pope, under the seals of the bishop and convent, 'the authentic history of his life written a hundred years before in the English language'. There can be little doubt that the work thus sent was the life by Colman, and the probability is that it remained in Rome. At any rate there is no record of any subsequent return of the book to England. It is possible too that this was not the only saint's life written in English by Colman, since William of Malmesbury claims to have re-translated into Latin passages from the life of St Gregory which, together with many others, Colman had translated into English.[1]

It was natural enough that the lives of the great Anglo-Saxon saints should have been written in the vernacular; it is more surprising to find that there was formerly in existence an Old English version of the life of St Quentin, a fragment of which—nine lines in a 12th-century hand—is still preserved in Cotton Vitellius A xv. So far as we can tell it was merely a free translation of the existing Latin *Passio,* and had it survived in entirety would have been of comparatively little interest.[2] In another Cottonian manuscript—Tiberius B v—in an nth-century hand, is a somewhat longer fragment *of famnes and Mambres,* 'a legend that had been pretty thoroughly

[1] R. R. Darlington, *Vita Wulfstam* (London 1928), pp. 2, 11, but it is doubtful whether the second reference really is to complete lives.

[2] *Neues Archiv* cvi, 258-61.

destroyed elsewhere than in England.'[1] A manuscript burned in the Cottonian fire—Otho B x—apparently contained an Old English version of the *Passion of St Margaret,* but the legend is known from two extant Old English versions and it is unlikely that this lost one contained anything new.

In one of his homilies Ælfric excuses himself from telling of St Thomas because the account of his death has 'previously been translated from Latin into English verse'; but this English version no longer survives. Elsewhere the same author mentions an Old English account of the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul. Since he can hardly be referring to the version in the Old English *Martyrology,* this work too must long since have been lost.[2] It appears to be fairly certain that there once existed an English version of the life of St Ninian. The author of the Latin life preserved in the 13th-century Cotton Tiberius D iii professes to give a detailed account of the saint, founded on Bede and on a *liber de vita et miraculis eius barbarice scriptus;* whilst, according to the title, the Latin account is a translation from the English.[3] Nothing more is known of the English life, but there is no reason for disbelief in its former existence. Similarly with the anonymous Latin life of St Indract in the early 12th-century BodL Digby 112. The author, whoever he may have been, is careful in his closing words to make it clear that all his statements have the authority of an Old English original.[4]

For later vernacular lives of the saints the evidence is less convincing, and often enough the works themselves are probably still extant. Collections of saints' lives are occasionally to be met with in catalogues and wills, though as a rule the description is too general for any satisfactory identification to be possible. The catalogue of the library of Titchfield Abbey, drawn up in 1400, includes a *Legenda sanctorum que*

[1] *Neues Archiv* cviii, 15-28; see also G. H. Gerould, *op.cit.,* p. 123.
[2] B. Thorpe, *The Homilies of mfric* (London 1844) ii, 520; i, 370.
[3] Hardy i, 45. [4] *Gesta Regum* i, cxviii ff.

dicitur aurea in anglicise The only English version of the *Legenda aurea* available at this date, so far as is known, is the *Festial* of John Myrc. If this was the work in the Titchfield library it was an earlier copy than any of those still extant; in fact it is questionable if it be not too early to be the work of Myrc. The *Festial* is usually said to have been written c. 1400, but all we know definitely is that it was certainly finished before 1415. Less probably the title here may refer to one of the many manuscripts, extant or lost, of the *Southern Legendary*. Thomas Berkley in 1415 bequeathes a *legendam sanctorum in Anglicis*, no doubt a copy of Myrc;[2] and similar references are probably to the same work, or perhaps to the version of the *Legenda Aurea* made in 1438. So, in 1467, Peter Arderne leaves to his wife 'my boke of Legenda Sanctorum in Englissh';[3] in 1480 Ann, Duchess of Buckingham, leaves to her daughter 'a book of English called "Legenda Sanctorum" ';[4] and at the time of the dissolution Bretton Priory possessed a 'Legenda Aurea in englysche'.[5] Perhaps more interesting was the 'boke of ye dowts of ye legends, both temporall and of saints' which William Bruyn in 1477 left to the church of St Gregory, Norwich, 'to be schewed in the chauncell for them yt will leryn thereon yt is wretyn therein'.[6]

As far as individual saints' lives are concerned the author of the *Ancrene Riwle* refers his readers to 'our Englische boc of Seinte Margarete',[7] almost certainly the vernacular life of that saint preserved in the *Katherine Group*. In the late

[1] *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical Society:* Literary and Historical Section, vol. v, part iii, p. 166.

[2] E. F. Jacob & H. C. Johnson, *Register of Henry Chichele* (Canterbury & York Society 1937) ii, 124.

[3] *S3.* liii, 102 n.

[4] N. H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta* (London 1826), p. 356.

[5] J. W. Walker, *Chartularies of Monkbretton Priory* (Yorks. Arch. Soc.; Record Series Ixvi), pp. 5-9.

[6] *Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society* iv, 335.

[7] Ed. J. Morton (London 1853), p. 244.

14th-century catalogue of the library at Peterborough one of the volumes contained a *Vita S. Thome Martyris Anglice*.[1] No Middle English work of the 14th century or earlier is known which deals with Becket alone, but in the various manuscripts of the *Southern Legendary* his life and death are treated at considerable length, and in all probability this was simply an extract from one of the legendaries. In 1458 Sir Thomas Cheworth leaves to his cousin Robert Clifton 'a newe boke of Inglisse, ye which begynnyth with ye lyffe of Seynt Albon and Amphiabell and other mony dyvers Iyfe5 and thynges in ye same boke',[2]—probably a copy of Lydgate's work, and perhaps the extant Huntington H.M. 40. An inventory of the goods of Elizabeth Sywardby of Sewerby, drawn up in 1468, includes an English version of the *Revelations* of St Brigid,[3] and similarly Margaret Purdans in 1481 leaves to the nunnery at Thetford an English book of St Bridget.[4] In 1485-6 Thomas Horneby of York leaves a *librum de Vita Katerinse, in AngliciSy* which might have been a version of any one of the numerous extant lives of that saint.[5] An inventory of the English books of John Paston, made sometime after 1475, included a life of St Christopher,[6] the only known version of that saint's life in Middle English being the fragmentary one preserved in the Thornton Miscellany.

More definite evidence for a lost work is provided by the author of the *Scottish Legendary* (written c. 1400), who, in addition to his extant work, claims to have translated some part of the story of Christ and the Virgin.[7] To judge from the account which he gives, the work must have been of considerable length, including not only a complete account of

[1] *Trans. Bib. Soc.*, Supplement v, p. 72.
[2] *SS.* xxx, 227.
[3] *SS.* xlv, 163.
[4] *Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society* iv, 336.
[5] *SS.* xlv, 165 n. 2.
[6] J. Gairdner, *The Paston Letters* (London 1904) vi, 65.
[7] W. M. Metcalfe, *Legends of the Saints* (STS. 1896) i, xxvi.

Christ and the Virgin but also a series of sixty-six miracles. There is no extant work with which this could be identified, and it must since have been lost. Similarly some of the saints' legends of Bokenham still survive, but he claims also to have compiled an English version of *'Legenda Aurea* and of oper famous legendes at the instaunce of my specialle frendis' containing lives of 'Seynt Cedde, Seynt Felix, Seynt Edwarde, Seynt Oswalde and many oper seyntis of Englond'.[1] This can hardly be represented by any of the extant translations of the *Legenda Aurea,* since none of them contains lives of these English saints.

Finally the 16th-century catalogue of the library of Syon Monastery mentions an English version of the legend of the Three Kings, and of the life of St Jerome, versions of both of which still exist, as well as an English life of St Francis which, unless it is an extract from one of the legendaries, must since have been lost. In addition, in the index to the catalogue is a reference to an English version of the *Revelations* of St Elizabeth of Hungary.[2]

This completes the evidence for lost written versions in the vernacular of the lives of saints, but it is improbable that the list is at all comprehensive. Now and again the authors of the extant Latin lives happen to have given definite information about their originals, but at other times the information given is quite indefinite. Jocelyn of Canterbury, writing towards the end of the 11th cejitury, tells us, in the prologue to his life of St Edith, that he has made use of both oral and written evidence. Later, when describing how Theodoric, one of the original dancers of Colbeck, was healed at the shrine of the saint, he tells how the whole affair was written down *patriis literis* at the command of the abbess. No doubt this was one of the English books used by the author, but he tells

[1] *Englische Studien* x, 1 ff.

[1] M. Bateson, *Catalogue of the Library of Syon Monastery, hleworth* (Cambridge 1898) pp 101, 111.

us nothing definite about his other sources, whether English or Latin.[1] Such vernacular sources were not, of course, confined to English, as is seen from the fact that Irish and Scottish sources are sometimes mentioned. So, for example, Geoffrey, abbot of Burton (1114-51), obtained some of the materials for his life of St Modwenna from Ireland and *de lingua barbara.* Adamnan, in his life of Columba, used poems in the Scottish tongue in praise of the saint, and Jocelyn of Furness used a *codkulumstilo Scotico dictatum* for his life of St Kentigern. More frequently the author merely claims to have had access to some very early authority, without specifying the language of his original. The author of the life of St Cyned states that he had seen much more concerning the saint in a manuscript which he had met with in Wales and which was nearly illegible from age. The extant life of St Gudwal is an extract from one more ancient; and the author of the life of St Egwine tells us that he is relating what he has gathered from ancient writings, and in fact his work is probably based on Egwine's own autobiography. Most of these ancient writings, if they existed at all, were probably in Latin. But that this was not invariably so is shown by the life of St Mildred in which the author admits that he is borrowing from an ancient account of her life, and which is in fact based on an extant Old English'life.[2] Similarly Laurence, abbot of Westminster, at the request of Henry II, compiled a life of the Confessor 'from various ancient treatises', and that some of these may have been in English is suggested by the extant *Vision of Earl Leofric.* [3]

It must be remembered, too, that vernacular legends of the saints existed in other than written accounts, and that an oral literature had grown up round the more popular ones. It is

[1] *Analecta Bollandiana* Ivi, 39, 292.

[2] Hardy i, 97, 170, 208, 84, 372, 415 377-

[3] *Gesta Abbatwn Monasterii S. Albani* (RS. 28, iv, I, 159); see also *Trans. Philological Society,* 1907-10, pp. 180-8,

probable that some of the stories which Bede tells of St Augustine, Laurentius of Canterbury, Aidan, and others of the great figures in the conversion of England, are taken from oral legend. Occasionally these appear to have remained current for a long time, and although many were eventually incorporated in Latin lives others seem to have remained in popular memory connected with some particular locality. The life of St Chad is extant in Old English as well as in Latin, but at the very end of the Middle Ages places were still being pointed out which popular legend associated with him.[1]

In addition to the lost life of Oswald, mentioned above, there seem to have existed during the Old English period numerous popular tales about the king. According to Bede his dying words had already become proverbial:

> It is also given out, and become a proverb, 'That he ended his life in prayer:[1] for when he was beset with weapons and enemies, he perceived he must immediately be killed, and prayed to God for the souls of his army. Whence it is proverbially said, 'Lord have mercy on their souls, said Oswald, as he fell to the ground.'[2]

Professor Klaeber has shown the ease with which these proverbial last words of the king can be turned into alliterative verse:

> Dryhtin, miltsa dugupa sawlum,
> Cwæp Oswald cyning, pa he on eorpan sag.[3]

and it may be noted that Reginald of Durham seems to indicate that his lost Old English source was in verse.

Another story which Bede seems to have taken from vernacular legend is that of the murder of Oswine (afterwards, canonized in popular tradition) by Oswy of Northumbria:

> Oswy, however, had in the early part of his reign a partner in the royal office, by name Oswine, of the line of King Edwin, his father

---

[1] *Leland ii*, 51, 99.
[2] C. Plummer, *Baedae Opera Historica* (Oxford 1896) i, 151,
[3] *Philological Quarterly* xvi, 214.

being Osric, to whom we have referred above, a man of outstanding piety and devoutness, who ruled the province of the Deirans for seven years in the greatest prosperity, being himself beloved by all. But he [Oswy], who ruled the other and northern part of the people across the Humber, that is to say Bernicia, would have no peace with him [Oswine], nay rather, the causes of their disagreements increasing, he encompassed his death most foully. Inasmuch as each having gathered his army together against the other, Oswine, seeing that he could not wage battle with one who had the greater number of followers, deemed it wiser, putting aside all thought of battle, to reserve himself for a better opportunity. He therefore dismissed that army, which he had gathered together, and ordered each man to return to his home from that place which is called 'Uilfaræsdun', that is, the hill of Uilfar [? Gariston] and which is a lonely place nearly ten miles west of the village of Catterick. He himself turned aside, keeping only one faithful soldier, by name Tondheri, with him and lay hid in the house of an Earl Hunuald whom he thought to be his very good friend. But alas! grievous to say, it was quite otherwise, for betrayed by this same earl he and his follower aforesaid were by Oswy, through the hands of his councillor Ethilhuin, put to a death detested by all. This deed was done on the 20th August in the ninth year of his reign, at a place called Gilling [in Yorkshire], where afterwards a monastery was founded in expiation of this crime. [W.][1]

The murder took place in 651, and the fact that the names of the actors and the localities involved were still remembered eighty years later, is strong presumptive evidence that the event had become the subject of a popular saga.

In 793 .Æthelberht, the vassal king of East Anglia, was summoned to the court of Offa and there executed. The fact is certain though the reason for the deed is unknown. There was evidently something particularly atrocious about the whole business, for the young king was reckoned a saint and became one of the most popular names in the English kalendar. Later legend had much to say of the circumstances of his death, the extant sources showing two somewhat different versions. In Roger of Wendover and in the *Vitae duorum Offarum* the whole blame for the deed is placed on Offa's

[1] C, Plummer, *op.cit.* i, 154.

wicked queen Cynethryth. Æthelberht goes of his own accord to the court of Offa to beg for his daughter as wife, and is kindly received by the king. The queen tries to stir up trouble, but Offa refuses to listen. She then prepares a room for Æthelberht, and near the bed arranges a splendid throne, under which a deep pit has been dug. Æthelberht is feasted by Offa, but when he retires to his room and sits on the throne he is precipitated into the pit and there suffocated by servants of the queen.[1] This version presumably represents the legend current at St Albans where the king, as one of the founders of the monastery, is represented as innocent of any complicity in the deed. Legends of the martyr, however, appear to have flourished also in the neighbourhood of Hereford, and these had not the same interest in sparing the memory of Offa. They appear in the lives of the saint by Giraldus Cambrensis and by Osbert of Clare, but the earliest version is that found in the early 12th-century *Passio Sancti Athelberhti*. According to this the queen succeeds in poisoning Offa's mind by her insinuations; thereupon he offers a reward to anyone who will inveigle /Ethelberht into the royal bedchamber. A certain Winberht, who had formerly been at the court of Æthelberht's father but had committed murder and been forced to flee, accepts the offer. He goes to meet the saint, who asks the reason for Offa's absence, whereupon

Winberht replied: 'He learned too late by your messenger, O king, of your arrival. He declared it to be a great honour to him that the King of the East Angles should wish to visit the King of the Mercians, and he added: "Whatever he asks of me forthwith he shall obtain it." But today he has been bled'. . . . Then the blessed King Æthelberht said: 'Let us go in and meet King Offa.' Winberht replied: 'It is not fitting that anyone should go in to meet the king with his sword on in time of peace. Therefore, O king, put aside your arms and thus goin with the courtiers.' Then [Æthelberht] in the innocence of his mind discarded the sword that he was carrying

[1] Wendover i, 249-51; see also R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction* (Cambridge 1932), pp. 240-1.

and gave it to the guileful Winberht. With a few retainers the holy king went to meet a king steeped in evil. The royal door is closed. At once from all sides treachery springs forth. The blameless king is seized, he is confined in chains, he is made to suffer the greatest wretchedness. At length, with his own sword he is beheaded by Winberht. [W.]

James suggests that the whole *Passio* is based on a 'homily or poem in the vernacular', although if this is true the original has disappeared. It is probably more correct to suppose, with Wright, that the work is based rather 'on vernacular traditions current in Hereford and its neighbourhood in Anglo-Saxon times'.[1]

Legends were certainly current concerning St Kenelm of Mercia, the supposed son of Coenwulf. That king is said to have died in 821 whilst on an expedition against the Welsh, and more or less contemporary authorities state that he was succeeded by his brother Ceolwulf. Nevertheless a story seems to have arisen tellftig how Coenwulf left a son Kenelm who was only seven years old at the time, but was nevertheless acknowledged as king. After reigning only a few days the boy was murdered by the contrivance of his elder sister Cwenthryth, abbess of Winchcombe. The tale first appears in Florence of Worcester; Giraldus Cambrensis knew of legends dealing with Kenelm and his wicked sister;[2] and later writers tell how news of the saint's death was carried to Rome by a white pigeon which dropped a letter on the altar of St Peter:

This writing, which was in letters of gold in the English language was, at the Pope's bidding, in vain attempted to be read by the Romans and other ecclesiastics who were present; but fortunately there was among them an Englishman, who turned the writing into the Latin tongue, and brought it to pass that a letter from the Roman pontiff made known to the English kings where the martyr of their country lay. The following, among other things, was in the

[1] *EHR.* xxxii, 214 ff.; see also Wright, *op.cit.*, p. 96.
[2] Florence of Worcester i, 65; *Itinerarium Kambriæ*, p. 25,

letter, 'In clento cou bathe Kenelm kynebearn lith under thorne haeuedes bereaved.'[1]

It has been pointed out that a slight emendation would give two reasonably good alliterative lines:

In clento cou bathe Kenelm kynebearn
lith under (ha3e)thorne haeuedes bereaued.

Of course the existence of an actual poem on the subject can hardly be assumed on such slight evidence, but it is obvious that vernacular tales on the subject must have been widespread. Other late authorities commemorate the fate of Kenelm under the date of his anniversary, July 17. Historically there seems to be no justification for the story, yet Kenelm became a favourite saint of the Middle Ages, and the place where his body was hidden in a brake was a well-known haunt of pilgrinfcs.

Although we often have reason to suspect the presence of oral sagas among the Anglo-Saxons, it is only exceptionally that we can see the actual progress of these stories from the oral to the written form. One of these exceptions occurs in the account of the death of St Edmund of East Anglia recorded in the *Passio S. Eadmundi* (985-7) of Abbo of Fleury. Asser and the *Chronicle* simply say that Edmund was defeated and slain by the Danes at Hoxne in 870, but Abbo has a circumstantial account of the king's death, and gives also the line of descent of the story, which he apparently had at second hand from an eyewitness. He tells how the monks at Ramsey had begged him to commit to writing the passion of the saint, for they

had heard that those things, which were unknown to many and written down by no one but which had been preserved in an historical manner through the memory of antiquity, your Reverence had related in my presence to the Lord Bishop of the Church of Rochester and to the Abbot of the monastery called Malmesbury,

[1] Wendover i, 273 ff.

and to others of the brothers standing round, whom you cease not to nourish, as your custom is, with the food of the Divine Word both in Latin and in your own language. To these, your eyes filled with tears, you were wont to reveal that as a young man you had learned it from a certain very old man, who full of faith related it in simple manner to the most glorious Æthelstan, King of the English, asserting most solemnly that on that very day he had been the armour-bearer of that blessed man in the place where he fell a martyr for Christ's sake. Such faith did you put in his assertion that at the prompting of memory you moulded it afresh in a narrative which some time later you retold in pleasing style to a younger generation. [W.][1]

Here the oral legend has already had a life of over a hundred years before it was written down. Probably the legend was still fairly close to historical fact, but it was not long before various marvellous stories began to spring up about the youth of the saint. The early lives know nothing about his origin or early years, but with the growth of his cult legend soon remedied the deficiency. Writing sometime between 1148 and 1156 Geoffrey of Wells tells how Offa, kin§ of the East Angles, set out on a pilgrimage to Rome. On his way he passed through the land of the Old Saxons where he was welcomed by the king and served assiduously by a number of youths, especially by Edmund the younger son of the king. Offa, on leaving, gives Edmund a gold ring and shows him another, adding that if it should be sent to him with any command he must obey. Offa continues to Jerusalem, but on his way back falls ill and dies, first naming Edmund as his successor and giving to his counsellors a ring which is to be sent to Edmund. They deliver their message, and eventually Edmund is allowed to go to England. After some delay he is crowned king of East Anglia, but does not reign long before the Danish invasions begin. According to Geoffrey this story was current among the monks of Bury, and further evidence for the existence in the vernacular of such legends is afforded by *La Vie Seint*

[1] *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey* (RS. 96, i, 3).

Edmund le Rey of Denis Pyramus, said to be based on both English and Latin sources. Now the sources used by Denis Pyramus, so far as we know, are the works of Geoffrey of Wells and Abbo of Fleury, both in Latin. The way in which he speaks of his English authorities suggests that, like the Latin ones, they too were in written form. If so they have long since been lost, though perhaps they may be included among the titles of works on the Edmund story, not now existing, which are written in the margins of Bodl. 240, e.g. the *Book of Bliburgh, Nicholaus de Warengford, H. Norvicensis,* or *alia Legenda.*[1]

The next royal saint is Edward, who succeeded his father Edgar in 975. He was slain within a few years of his accession, and the manner of his death gave rise to numerous stories, some of which can be traced in later Latin works. The *Chronicle* gives the bare fact of his death 'æt Corfes geate', but popular rumour was not so discreet and either hinted at the complicity of his stepmother Ælfthryth or openly accused her. Our nearest contemporary source, the *Vita Oswaldi,* is ambiguous about the queen's part in the murder. Edward is said to have ridden to Corfe to visit his half-brother, and whilst still on horseback was surrounded by soldiers, one of whom

> took hold of his right hand as if he wished to salute him, another caught him roughly by the left hand at the same time wounding him. But [the king], as much as he could, cried out in a loud voice: 'Why are you breaking my right arm?' and suddenly fell from his horse and died. [W.][2]

Ælfthryth is first connected with the murder about a hundred years later in Osbern's *Life of St Dunstan,* and Florence of Worcester has no doubt that the murder was committed by her orders. Henry of Huntingdon repeats the accusation, and has apparently heard of other stories in which Ælfthryth

[1] *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey* (RS. 96, i, 93; ii, 228).
[2] *Historians of the phurch of York* (RS. 71, i, 450).

herself is responsible for the actual murder.[1] According to William of Malmesbury Edward was stabbed whilst drinking from a cup of wine offered to him by Ælfthryth, but here it is a servant who commits the actual murder.[2] Walter Map knows still another version in which Ælfthryth gives poison to the king, and when this fails hires soldiers to slay him. But the most elaborate story of all is that told by Gaimar. Edward's dwarf, Wolstanet, fleeing from the anger of the king, rides off to Æfthryth's house. The king follows, but Wolstanet has hidden in a thick wood, so the king turns aside to his stepmother's house to ask if anyone has seen the dwarf. He finds very few people there and these hesitate to answer him; then the queen comes, begs the king to dismount and rest, and offers to have a search made. The king refuses to dismount, but agrees to accept wine. A horn of wine is brought, and half of it drunk by the queen and half by the king; but when he returns the horn to her and is about to kiss her, he is stabbed to the heart by an unknown servant. The queen has the body buried on a lonely moor and the place covered over with reeds. During the night, however, it is revealed by a bright ray of light shining from heaven, carried to Shaftesbury and there buried.[3] These different versions indicate that there must have been in circulation many different stories dealing with the death of Edward which are known today only from the later Latin writings. Moreover, according to Wulfstan of York, 'Edward was betrayed and afterwards killed and after that burned', although none of the versions known to us says anything about the burning of Edward's body, nor do we know any further details of this particular story.

These are some of the more important and best known of the stories which grew up round some of the Anglo-Saxon saints; and, quite certainly, similar stories were current concerning others, such as St Neot, Dunstan, and the Confessor.

[1] Huntingdon, p. 167.
[2] *Gesta Regum* i, 183.
[3] Gaimar i, 168 ff.

Some of them may have been due to literary and ecclesiastical influence, but it seems certain that others were of popular origin and current only in the oral vernacular literature. Nor did such stories cease with the Conquest; in later times many saints were popularly regarded as such but never officially canonized, and the tales which grew up round them were almost certainly in the vernacular. This happened, for example, to John Schorn, who put the devil into a shoe; and legends flourished round Thomas of Lancaster, Edward II, and Archbishop Scrope.

VI

ROMANCE

ON the whole, it is unlikely that many romances of any of the three great Matters have been lost. So far as we can tell these romances, at any rate in England, appear to have been a distinctively literary development, so that they were assured of a written existence. Popular stories concerning Arthur may have been current before the appearance of Geoffrey's book, though the evidence for this is not decisive.[1] Perhaps some of the Arthurian heroes, Tristram and Gawain for instance, were known to the common people at an early date, but it is unlikely that there was ever much in English about Lancelot or the Quest of the Grail, to say nothing of the minor characters of the legend.

The story of Arthur apparently originated in Wales, the earliest evidence being the account given by Nennius, while the *Annales Cambriae* add that Arthur and Medraut fell at Camlann, whether as enemies or as allies is left uncertain. In the early lives of Welsh saints Arthur is seldom conspicuous, but his appearance with Cei and Bedguir in the life of St Cadog, and the allusion there to his chivalrous activities, may indicate the existence of earlier stories of the king. Caradoc of Llancarfan, in his *Vita Gildae* (c. 1100), has two stories of Arthur, an account of the killing of Hueil, brother of the saint, in fair fight by Arthur, and the abduction of Guinevere;

[1] See more particularly *Romanic Review* xxxii, 3 ff., and J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (California U.P. 1950), pp. 178-229.

but neither of these is particularly good evidence for the existence of traditional tales about the king. In Geoffrey's *Historia* there is a suggestion of earlier tales about him, but again no proof of any considerable cycle, though the 'British hope' certainly antedates Geoffrey. This is clearly shown by the reference in Herman of Tournai. In 1113 certain canons of Laon were sent to raise funds for the rebuilding of their cathedral. On their way from Exeter to Bodmin they were shown the seat and oven of King Arthur, while at Bodmin one of their servants fell into a dispute with a cripple who maintained that Arthur still lived, and only with difficulty was bloodshed averted.[1] Similarly William of Malmesbury, writing in 1125, considered Arthur 'a man worthy to be celebrated, not by idle tales, but by authentic history', and what these idle tales were is indicated by a later passage where he says that Arthur's grave has never been found, and so the old foolish lies that he will return again.[2]

A more doubtful reference is that found in the *Speculum Charitatis* (c. 1141-2) of Ailred of Rievaulx. This contains a dialogue between the author and a novice, in the course of which the latter confesses that he has frequently been moved to tears by the misfortunes of a certain Arthur.[3] It has usually been assumed that a copy of Geoffrey's book could hardly have made its way so far north as early as this, and that the reference here must be to tales of Arthur already current orally throughout the district. Perhaps such stories may have spread through Yorkshire from the Bretons in the household of the duke of Brittany, holder of the honour of Richmond. But it is equally possible that Ailred had in fact already seen a copy of the *Historia*. Walter Espec, founder of Rievaulx of which Ailred was abbot, had received a copy of Geoffrey's work from Robert of Gloucester, certainly before 1147, and perhaps early enough for Ailred to have seen it before he

[1] *Patrologia Latina* clvi, 983 ff. [2] *Gesta Regum* i, 11.
[3] *Patrologia Latina* cxcv, 565.

wrote this particular work. Equally ambiguous is the evidence of Alfred of Beverley. It was hearing tales of Arthur which led him to borrow Geoffrey's book and to compile his own unimportant chronicle.[1] This again may perhaps provide evidence for the existence of tales of Arthur independent of Geoffrey, or merely indicate an early vogue of the *Historia* in Yorkshire.

Consequently, although there is a little evidence for the existence in England of stories of Arthur before 1136, it can hardly be pressed very far, and indeed suggests that where such tales occur they are due to exceptional circumstances. After that date evidence for the existence of popular stories unconnected with the *Historia* is even slighter. Giraldus Cambrensis knew tales of Arthur. He tells of the discovery of the bodies of Arthur and Guinevere at Glastonbury, mentions the fables current concerning the death of the king, and gives the inscription on the coffin, 'Hie jacet sepultus inclitus rex Arthurus cum Wennevereia uxore sua secunda in insula Avallonia.' This version, with its quite exceptional mention of Guinevere as the second wife of Arthur, is mysterious and suggests a knowledge of stories which have since disappeared.[2] Elsewhere Giraldus has the story that Arthur had killed the brother of Gildas, and that this had led Gildas to fling into the sea the books he had written concerning the deeds of Arthur. He attaches the responsibility for a jest about a fishing coracle to a certain 'famosus ille fabulator Bledhericus', known from other sources as an authority on the Arthurian legend and one who knew all the secrets of the Grail.[3] However, knowledge of such legends by Giraldus need

[1] T. Hearne, *Aluredi Beverlacensis Annales* (Oxford 1716), pp. 2-3.

[2] *De Principis Instructions*, pp. 126 ff., and for variant forms of the inscription see also *Speculum Ecclesise*, pp. 47 ff.; RS. 9, ii, 363; RS. 66, p. 36; *Leland* i, 288.

[3] *Descriptiæ, Kambrtee*, pp. 209, 202.

only indicate an oral tradition in Wales and is no proof of its existence in England or in English. At a later date there are some indications of the popularity of Arthur. In 1278 Edward I had the tomb of Arthur at Glastonbury opened and the body translated for safety to Worcester, while the crown of Arthur was one of the spoils of the Welsh campaign.[1] But in all probability such references merely reflect the later popularity of Geoffrey's work.

A difficulty arises when we come to deal with occasional references to written works on the Arthurian legend,—the fact that the references are often so general that it is impossible to be certain whether the work in question was an Arthurian story no longer represented in the extant literature, or simply a version of one of the surviving romances. Nor are the references always clear as to the language in which the work was written. Merton College, Oxford, MS. 248, contains a collection of sermons compiled (c. 1350) by John Sheppey, bishop of Rochester. The sermons are by different authors, some consisting merely of outlines, and one such has a tantalizing reference to a *sermo de rotunda tabula* .[2] The only round table of which we know is the Arthurian one, and although the phrase *rotunda tabula* is frequently used of tournaments in the 13th century[3] it is difficult to see how such a sense would fit here, unless it was perhaps a sermon against the holding of tournaments. The reference is possibly to some lost Arthurian story, but the indications are too vague to permit of any certainty.

The books left to Bordesley Abbey in 1315 by Guy de Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, included *un volum de la martly Roy Arthur, e de Mordretf* and Queen Isabel (d. 1358)

[1] *Annales Monastici* (RS. 36, iv, 474,489; ii, 401). See also RS. 76, i, 91.

[2] *MLN.* xlix, 394.

[3] *Annales Monastici* (RS. 36, ii, 402; iii, 313), *Chronica Majora* v, 318.

[4] E. Edwards, *Memoirs of Libraries* (London 1859) i, 375-6.

possessed *unus magnus liber . . . de gestis Arthuri,* probably identical with the *Romance de Roy Arthure* possessed by Richard II in I384-5.[1] Among the goods of Sir John Fastolf in 1450 was a *liber de Roy Artour .*[2] All these were in French, and so presumably was the 'book called Arthur de Bretagne' left to 'my daughter Engaine' in 1391 by Margaret, countess of Devon, though it may perhaps have been an earlier version of the extant *Arthur of Little Britain**

On the continent the most important of Arthur's knights was Sir Lancelot, but he never appears to have become popular in England. The reference in Chaucer's *Nuns' Priest's Tale* (vii, 3212) to the 'book of Launcelot de Lake' is presumably to a French romance, or perhaps an earlier version of the extant *Lancelot of the Laik.* The books left to Bordesley Abbey by Guy de Beauchamp included *lepremer levere de Lancelot;*[4] and one of his ancestors, William de Beauchamp, had left to his daughter Joan in 1268 a 'book of Lancelot'.[5] In 1380 Elizabeth la Zouche left 'books called Tristrem and Lanchelot'; in 1412 Elizabeth Darcy left to Philip, son and heir to the late Lord Darcy, a book called 'Lanselake';[6] and in 1392 Isabella, duchess of York, leaves a 'Lancelot' to her son Edward.[7] A book of the same title was possessed by Thomas Hebbeden who, in 1435, bequeathes to Isabella Eure *unum librum gallicum vocatum Launcelot.*[8] This last was certainly in French, and the probability is that the others were too.

Gawain was easily the most popular of all Arthur's knights in England. His fame was known to William of Malmesbury since his grave, unlike that of Arthur, had recently (1087) been discovered in 'a province of Wales called Ross':

[1] E. Rickert, *Trans. Bib. Soc.* xiii, 144 ff.
[2] *HMC., 8th Report,* Appendix, p. 268.
[3] N. H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta* (London 1826), p. 127.
[4] E. Edwards, *op.cit.* i, 375-6.
[5] N. H. Nicolas, *op.cit., p.* 50.
[6] A. Gibbons, *Early Lincoln Wills* (Lincoln 1888), pp. 92, 118.
[7] E. Rickert, *loc.cit.*
[8] *SS.* ii, 84.

The sepulchre of Arthur is nowhere to be seen, whence ancient ballads fable that he is still to come. But the tomb of the other, as I have suggested, was found in the time of King William on the sea coast, fourteen feet long; there, as some relate, he was wounded by his enemies and suffered shipwreck; others say that he was killed by his subjects at a public entertainment.[1]

Queen Isabel, in 1358, possessed a French copy of *Percival and Gawain,* presumably the same as the *Romance de Perciuall & Gdwyn* which appears in 1384-5 amongst Richard II's books.[2] Wyntoun says that the fabulous Huchon of the Aule Reale had written of the *Awntyr of Gawane,* as well as a *gret Gest of Arthure* and the *Pistil of Suet Susane.*[3] The last of these is certainly still in existence, but it is impossible to tell whether the other two titles represent works still in existence or ones which have since been lost.

On the continent there are early references to the Tristram story in the poems of the famous troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn; and Chrestien de Troyes wrote 'del roi Marcet d'Iseut la blonde', although his work has since disappeared. In addition there is evidence for the existence of a version of the story in England during the early Middle English period. The author of the Anglo-Norman *Waldef* says that both Waldef and Tristram were famous heroes, beloved by the English both high and low, in words which suggest that, translating as he is from an English original, he knew also of English poems on Tristram.[4] However the only extant representative of the legend in Middle English is the 14th-century *Sir Tristrem* by Thomas of Erceldoun, and this is probably the one referred to by Robert Mannyng of Brunne in his chronicle.[5] Among the books of Queen Isabel was a book of

[1] *Gesta Regum* ii, 342. [2] E. Rickert, *loc.cit.*

[3] F. J. Amours, *Wyntoun's Original Chronicle* (STS. 1902-14) iv, 23, 21.

[4] R. Imelmann, *Johannes Bramis' Historia Regis Waldei* (Bonn 1912), pp. **xxxi** ff.

[5] Mannyng i, 4.

Tristram & Isolda,[1] which was probably in French, as were most of the copies of the romance which appear in wills. This was certainly the language of the Tristram romance in the will of John Lescrop (i4O5),[2] but in others no definite mention of the language is made. So in 1380 Elizabeth la Zouche leaves 'to my lord le Zouche . . . books called Tristrem and Lanchelot',[3] and in 1390 Margaret Courtenay, countess of Devon, bequeathes a *Tristram* and a *Merlyn.*[4] In 1420 Matilda del Bowes leaves various 'romance' books, and also *unum librum pat is called Trystram;*[5] and here, since the other books are described as 'romance', i.e. in French, the omission in the case of *Trystram* suggests that it may well have been in English. In 1426 Thomas Beaufort, duke of Exeter, leaves to his sister Johanna, countess of Westmorland, *unum librum vocaf Tristram.*[6]

Very little is extant in English on the Grail legend, and the occasional references are probably to French versions of the story. This is certainly true of the 'volum del Romounce Josep ab Arimathie e deu Seint Grael', left to Bordesley Abbey by the earl of Warwick,[7] and also, presumably, of the 'liure appelle Galaath' possessed by Richard II.[8]

The earliest reference to the Matter of France by an English writer, if so he may be called, occurs in Ordericus Vitalis:

> Anthony, a monk of Winchester, brought [the legend of William Courtnez of Toulouse] here not long since, and complied with our eager desire to see it. There is indeed a story in verse concerning St William which is commonly sung by minstrels, but the preference must be justly given to an authentic narrative. . . . But as the

[1] E. Rickert, *loc.cit.*
[2] *SS.* iv, 339.
[3] A. Gibbons, *op.cit.,* p. 92.
[4] E. Rickert, *loc.cit.*
[5] *SS.* ii, 63 ff.
[6] J. Nichols, *Royal Wills* (London 1780), p. 254.
[7] E. Edwards, *op.cit.* i, 375-6.
[8] E. Rickert, *loc.cit.*

bearer was in haste to depart and the severe winter's frost prevented me from writing, I made a short abridgement on my tablets, which I now haste to transfer correctly to parchment. . . 1

Later in the same century Walter Map complains that 'only the triflings of mimes in vulgar rhymes celebrates among us the godlike nobility of the Charles and Pepins'.[2] None of the extant romances of the Matter of France is earlier than the 14th century, so that if Ordericus and Map are referring to English works they have either been lost entirely or are earlier versions of the extant romances. The probability is, however, that the narrative of the monk of Winchester was in Latin and the popular tales in French. Nevertheless we know of at least one English romance which existed in a written form before the end of the13th century. In 1286 Baron Bjarni Erlingsson of Bjarkey, one of the great Norwegian magnates, was in Scotland looking after the interests of the Maid of Norway. On his return to Norway in the following year he took with him a romance in English which he later had translated into Norwegian. The English original has long since been lost, but the Norwegian version is still preserved as part of the *Karlamagnussaga* with the title *Af Fru' Olif ok Landres syni hennar,* and it is the introduction to this which tells how the tale became known in Norway.[3] Judging from the Norse version we need not greatly regret the disappearance of the English original. It appears to have been a dull work on the old folklore theme of the calumniated wife and the cruel mother-in-law.

When the catalogue of the library of St Augustine's, Canterbury, was drawn up in the 15th century, item 1517 contained, in addition to a French version of *Guy of Warwick,*

[1] Ordericus iii, 5.
[2] Map, *De nugis curialitm,* p. 203.
[3] C. R. Unger, *Karlamagnussaga ok Kappa hans* (Christiana 1860), p. 50.

a *Gesta Guydonis de Burgundia inpatria lingua.*[1] Guy of Burgundy was one of the heroes who took part in Charlemagne's legendary conquest of Spain; a French version of the romance is still extant but no English version appears to be known. The phrase *in patria lingua,* as compared with the *in gallico* of the preceding work, would seem to indicate that this was in English, and it looks as if we have here the only surviving trace of an English version of another of the romances of the Matter of France.

Elsewhere in wills, inventories and catalogues are to be found references to a fair number of romances of the Matter of France, but they are invariably in French or Latin, and provide no evidence for any lost romance in English. But an English version of the romance of *Ferumbras,* from which Robert Bruce, whilst a fugitive, read to his companions, still survives.[2]

There is not much evidence for lost romances of the Matter of Antiquity, and it is probable that what references there are refer to copies of works still in existence. In a letter written in 1284 Archbishop Peckham seems to suggest a popular interest in classical or pseudo-classical tales concerning the alleged Trojan descent of the Britons.[3] But the letter is to the Bishop of St Asaph and refers to stories current amongst the Welsh, not necessarily among the English. On the other hand Edward I and Henry IV seriously claimed overlordship of Scotland on the precedent of Locrine;[4] the chancellor Michael de la Pole appealed in Parliament to the legend of Brutus as evidence of the antiquity and absolutism of the

[1] *Canterbury and Dover,* p. 372.

[2] W. W. Skeat, *The Bruce* (EETS. ES. 11, 21, 29, 55) Hi, 435 ff.

[3] *Registrum Epistolarum J. Peckham Arch. Cant.* (RS. 77, ii, 741-2). On the legend of Brutus see *Essays and Studies* ix, 9 ff., *Speculum* ii, 33 if., and T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London 1950), *passim.*

[4] *Ypodigma Neustriae* (RS. 28, vii, 220 ff.); T. Rymer, *Foedera* viii, 155, 157.

royal dignity; while the household ordinances of Edward IV were.based on the precedents of King Cassibelaun and King Lud.[1] Romances of the Matter of Antiquity are not infrequent in catalogues and wills. Among the books of Guy de Beauchamp (d. 1315) were French versions of the *Siege of Troy,* the *Brut* and *Roy Constentine,* as well as the *Letter of Aristotle to Alexander.*[2] Queen Isabel (d. 1358) possessed a French version of the first of these,[3] and elsewhere when the language is not definitely mentioned it was probably Latin. In 1435 Thomas Hebbeden leaves a book called *Guydo de Columpna;*[4] and Thomas Dautree of York (1437) had a comparatively large number of books, including at least three of this kind, *de Gestis Trojanorum, de Gestis Alexandri* and *de Bello Trojanorum,* the two last appearing again in the will of his son John Dautree (1459).[5] Edmund Rede (1487) left books *de vita Alexandrie* and *de Obsessione Troje*[6]

No doubt Bodel's classification of the chief subjects of romance was comprehensive enough at the time he made it, but other subjects developed later which could not be included under one of the traditional matters. In England romances appear dealing with subjects from the history—real or legendary—of the country, and throughout the West subjects begin to appear from eastern sources. The romances dealing with English history are usually, on the analogy of the three great matters of romance, classified as The Matter of England. Some half-dozen of these are still extant, but there are references to a much greater number which have since been lost. Most of them deal with subjects from Old English history, but here we are concerned only with those which take as their subjects themes from post-Conquest history, or

[1] *Ancient Ordinances of the Royal Household* (London 1790), pp, 15 ff.
[2] E. Edwards, *op.cit.* i, 375-6.
[3] E Rickert, *loc.cit.*
[4] *SS.* ii, 84.
[5] *SS.* xxx, 59 ff., 232;
[6] *Trans. Bib. Soc.* vii, 118.

which are entirely unhistorical. Belonging to the latter class is the romance of *Waldef*, a long-drawn-out work in the style of *Bevis of Hampton*, and with little or no historical basis. It is extant only in an Anglo-Norman version in which the author states definitely that he is translating from an English original. This English version has long since disappeared, but it was still in existence as late as the 15th century when it was used by a certain John Bramis of Thetford to finish his translation of the incomplete French version into Latin. According to him the story of Waldef was first composed in English verse, and later translated into French at the request of a lady who did not understand English.[1]

In this case although the English version has been lost the Latin and the greater part of the French still remain. Similarly the story of Hereward is known to us from a brief Latin version of his *Gesta*, as well as from notices of his deeds in other works. Yet, when the *Gesta Herewardi Saxonis* was written, the English original on which it was partly based had been practically destroyed, and this during the lifetime of those who had been companions of the hero. In the introduction to the *Gesta* the author tells how the work came to be written. He was interested in the deeds of the famous outlaw and, hearing that there was in existence an English book describing his life, he sought for it with the intention of translating it into Latin. His search, however, is almost in vain for he finds nothing but a few mutilated and decayed pages. With difficulty he extracts from these some of the early deeds of Hereward as written in English by Leofric the Deacon, one of the companions of Hereward. Nothing more is to be found and consequently he lays the work aside. Then, apparently, someone in authority hears of the half-finished work and desires to see it. The author again takes up his pen and completes the book by means of personal reminiscences from the

[1] R. Imelmann, *Johannes Bramis' Historia Regis Waldei* (Bonn 1912), pp. 3 ff.

former companions of Hereward.[1] The present form of the *Gesta* lends a good deal of support to this story of its two-fold origin. The first part, said to be based on written materials, is full of fantastic stories about the ancestry and early life of the hero, while the second part, based on information derived from the former companions of Hereward, is much more restrained.

The work of Leofric the Deacon is not the only record of Hereward that has since been lost. The author of the *Liber Eliensis* refers to a work on the same subject by Richard of Ely, and unless this is identical with the extant *Gesta*—for we are not told whether Richard's work was in Latin or English—it no longer survives.[2] Details of Hereward's struggle against the Normans are to be found in some of the chroniclers, notably in the pseudo-Ingulph, John of Peterborough, Gaimar and the *Liber de Hyda,* but no indication is given of the sources for the various statements.

Although the written English versions of the Hereward story appear to have been lost at a comparatively early date, there is some evidence that he long continued popular among the country-people. According to the *Gesta,* his deeds were celebrated by the country people, and women and girls sang of them in their dances.[3] The author of the pseudo-Ingulph claimed to know ballads celebrating the deeds of Hereward,[4] and we seem to detect a reminiscence of one such song in the words used by Hereward when, disguised as a potter, he sought the court of the Conqueror, 'Ollae, ollse, bonae ollæt urnæ; omnia vasa hæc fictilia et optima'.[5] It has been shown that these words fall naturally into verse:

[1] *De Gestis Herewardi Saxonis* (RS. 91, i, 339).
[2] *Liber Eliensis,* p. 339.
[3] *De Gestis Herewardi Saxonis* (RS. 91, i, 344).
[4] W. Fulman, *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptorum Veterum* (Oxford 1684), pp. 67, 68.
[5] *Liber Eliensis,* p. 235.

Greofan, greofan, gode greofan and croccan;
Eal(le) *pas* læmenan fatu pa selestan.[1]

However, apart from these possible lines the songs have been lost, and quite probably never had any written existence at all. Nevertheless there is definite evidence for the former existence in English of at least one, and possibly two, lives of Hereward, along with numerous songs and ballads.

Another hero of the Conquest who appears to have become the subject of romance was a certain Eadric, who for long kept up a struggle against the Conqueror in the forests of the West. The *Chronicle* (s.a. 1067 D) tells how a powerful thane, Eadric cild, raised the West Midlands against William; he appears to have carried on a guerilla warfare for some years and did not submit until 1070. Brief notices of him are to be found in some of the Latin chroniclers. Ordericus gives his name in a list of those who submitted to the Conqueror after Hastings, and a little later tells of the revolt of the inhabitants of Shrewsbury who allied themselves with 'Eadric Guilda, a powerful and warlike man'.[2] Florence of Worcester and Symeon of Durham give the bare facts of his fight against the Normans in almost identical words; we hear of his submission to William, and he is particularly mentioned as accompanying the king in his invasion of Scotland in IO72.[3] So far there is no suggestion that Eadric is to develop into a hero of romance, but Walter Map tells a story of which the hero is a certain Eadric Wilde, said to have been lord of the manor of North Ledbury. One evening, returning late from the hunt, he came to a great house in which he saw a number of beautiful women. He immediately fell in love with one of them, entered the house, seized her, and with some difficulty succeeded in carrying her off. He lives happily with

[1] P*aulls Gnmdriss* (2nd ed.) ii, 1088.
[2] Ordericus ii, 166, 193.
[3] Symeon of Durham ii, 185, 194, 195; cf. Florence of Worcester ii, i, 7, 9.

her for some time, but eventually, because he mentions in anger the 'sisters' from whom he had snatched her, she vanishes and is never seen again.[1] The theme is not uncommon in folklore, and its use here shows that Eadric has evidently become a popular hero so that tales, with which he originally had no connexion, can be fathered upon him. Some reminiscence of his deeds may perhaps be preserved in the *Monasticon* where, under 'Wygmore Abbey', are given mythical details of his struggle against Ralf de Mortimer.[2] However, except for this short reference we know only the story attached to his name by Map, and nothing has remained of the works celebrating the deeds by which this Hereward of the west gained his fame.

Fulk Fitz Warin, a romance surviving only in a French version, tells of the hero's adventures as an outlaw in the forests of the west, with some adventures abroad, during the early part of the 13th century. There is no doubt that Fulk was a historical figure, and so were some of his companions; but elements from other sources—especially from the chansons de gestes and from popular tales—appear in the romance. Some version of it was evidently known to Peter of Langtoft, since he compares the outlaw life of Robert Bruce to that of 'Dam Waryn' as told in the book, but gives no information about the language of the work known to him.[3] The extant French version is in prose but was evidently drawn from an earlier one in verse, which was still extant in the 16th century when It is referred to by Leland. An English version, apparently already mutilated, was also known to Leland since, in his abstract of the romance, although he takes the greater part from the English, he has to rely on the French for the ending:

. . . Here lakkid a Quayre or ii. in the olde Englisch Booke of the nobile Actes of the Guarines. And these thinges that folow I

[1] Map, *De nugis curialium*, pp. 75 ff. [2] *Monasticon* vi, 348-9.
[3] *Langtoft* ii, 372.

translatid owte of an olde French Historic yn Rime of the Actes of the Guarines onto the Death of Fulco the2 . . -[1]

Neither the English nor the French romance appears to have been seen again after the time of Leland.

In *Piers Plowman* (v, 402) is a well-known reference to the 'rymes of Robyn hood and Randolfe erle of Chestre'. Many of the rhymes of Robin Hood remain, but those of Randolf, earl of Chester, have been completely lost. Langland has nothing more to say of them, and although Randolf plays an important part in *Fulk FitzWarin* there is no hint in that romance of any legends concerning him. But Dugdale's *Baronage* contains a long unhistorical story, ascribed to an 'old monk of Peterborough', which, in all probability, gives part of the lost romance. It tells in detail of the deposition of John and the invasion of the French. On the death of John the loyalists are rallied, and the invaders completely defeated at Lincoln; their leader, the earl of Perche, is killed by Randolf, and the young Henry crowned king. All this is quite unhistorical, and the fictitious nature of the narrative, together with the fact that the earl of Chester throughout plays the leading part, makes it probable that the monk of Peterborough has got hold of some romance glorifying the earl of Chester, attributing to him much of the importance and many of the achievements of the Earl Marshall, and taken it for sober history. Later in the same work Dugdale gives yet another story connected with Randolf:

In the time of this Roger [de Lacy, Constable of Chester], Ranulph, Earl of Chester, the last of that name, marching with some forces into Wales; for want of more strength, was constrained to betake himself unto a castle in those parts [viz. Rothelan], where

[1] J. Leland, *Collectanea,* ed. T. Hearne (Oxford 1724) i, 230 ff. In that part of Leland's account, taken from the lost Engjish version, some of the phrases suggest that his original may have been in alliterative verse.

being besieged by the Welsh, he sent for this Roger, then at Chester, to come to his relief: Who, forthwith gathering together divers Minstrels, and a multitude of loose people, advanced thitherward; which so alarmed the Welsh, supposing them to have been Soldiers, that they soon left their siege. The Earl therefore for this good service, by his Constable, gave him the Patronage of all the Minstrels in those parts; which he and his Heirs have ever after retained, but conferred upon Dutton his Steward, and his Heirs, the execution of that authority.[1]

Whether either or both of these stories supplied the content of the rhymes known to Langland it is, of course, impossible to say. Certainly one would expect the second to have been especially popular with medieval minstrels.

On f. 206 of the BM. Additional MS. 25459 is a list of the books belonging to Sir Simon Burley found at Baynards Castle after his execution. Most of them were in French and only one,j. *livre de Englys del Forster et del Sengkr,* is said to have been in English. No romance which would fit such a title as 'The Forester and the Wild Boar' is known today, nor is there any romance theme for which the title would be at all suitable. It may perhaps have been a book on venery; but that is unlikely, and the probability is that we have here yet another romance in English since lost.

In 1474 John Paston writes to Sir John Paston asking, among other things, for his 'book of the Metyng of the Dwke and of the Emperour'. What this may have been it is now impossible to say; perhaps the title would fit one or other of the Charlemagne romances. It does not seem to appear in an inventory, probably of this same John Paston's books, drawn up towards the end of the reign of Edward IV, which includes amongst the romances versions of *Guy of Warwick, Richard the Lion-heart* and *Child Ypotis.* In addition there is also included *Guy and Colbronde*—presumably

[1]W. Dugdale, *The Baronage of England* (London 1675) i, 42 ff., 101. See also J. H. Round, *Peerage and Pedigree* (London 1910) ii, 303 ff.

some form of *Guy of Warwick*—and the *Greene Knyght.* If this be the full title, the latter would then be a version of the extant romance of that name, but if some of the title is missing, as the manner of printing suggests, no guess can be made at the identity of the romance intended.[1]

Finally some mention should be made of the list of romances given in the *Complaynt of Scotlande.* This is a 16th-century work consisting of two principal parts—the author's *Discourse* concerning the affliction and misery of the country, and his *Dream of Dame Scotia* with her complaint against her three sons. These are connected by what the author calls his *Monologue Recreative* in which he relates the circumstances that interrupted his discourse. He takes advantage of the interruption to introduce what he knows of native songs, dances, tales, &c., under pretence of having had these brought to his notice during his 'recreative ramble'. Included in the list are the titles of many romances still surviving. Of those which cannot be definitely identified there are, from the Matter of Britain:

the tail of Syr Euan, Arthours knycht,—possibly a version of the extant *Ywain and Gawain,* or perhaps a romance on Ywain now lost.

Arthour knycht, he raid on nycht, vithtgyltin spur and candil lycht,—no romance is known with which these lines could be connected, and anyhow they read more like the beginning of a ballad than of a romance.

The only uncertain title in the Matter of France is

the tail of the brig of the mantribil,—probably a reference to *Ferumbras,* in which Mantribil is the name of a bridge over the river Flagot.

A number of stories on classical themes are listed, but they have nothing to do with the medieval Matter of Antiquity, and it is unlikely that any of them were in existence before the 16th century. The remaining romances are:

[1] J. Gairdner, *The Paston Letters* (London 1904) v, 207; vi, 65.

Robert le dyabil, due of Normandie,—not extant in Middle English, but two versions appear among the early printed books.

the tayl of the volfe of the varldis end,—volfe is here presumably a misprint for *velle* 'wel'. A fairy-tale with that title is known, but it is uncertain whether it goes back to medieval times.

Ferrand, erl of Flandris that mareit the deuyl,—probably a story similar to that which Giraldus tells of the origin of the Plantagenets, but none with Ferrand as the hero is known.

the taiyl of the reyde eyttyn vitht the thre heydis,—not now known, but presumably known to Sir David Lindsay since, during the minority of James V, he was accustomed to lull him to sleep with tales 'off the reid Etin, and the gyir carlyng'.[1]

the tayl of the giantis that eit quyk men,—some version of Jack the giant-killer or Jack and the Beanstalk.

On fut by fortht as I culd found,—more like the opening lines of a ballad than a romance. Not now known, but according to the table of contents to the Asloan MS. there formerly appeared, in a part of the MS. which has since been lost, 'Master Robert Hendersonis dreme, On fut by forth'.

the tail of the three futtit dog of norrouay,—not now known.

the tail quhou the kyng of estmure land mareit the kyngis dochtir of vestmure land,—some version of the *King Estmere* ballad.

Skail Gillenderson, the kyngis sone of Skellye,—some Old Norse legend which cannot now be identified.

the tail of Floremond of Albanye, that sleu the dragon be the see,—not now known.

the tail of Syr valtir, the bald Leslye,—not now known.

the tail of the pure tynt,—said to be a common nursery tale in Scotland.

Claryades and Maliades,—a 16th-century Scottish version, translated from the French, is still extant. In it the author

[1] J. Small, *Lyndesay's Monarche, &c.* (EETS. ll, 19), p. 264.

refers to an earlier version, probably in English, of which no trace now remains.[1]

the toyI of the zong Tamlene, and of the bald Braband'—not now known.

Syr Egeir and Syr Gryme,—referred to elsewhere in 15th-century works, but not now extant in manuscript. First printed edition in 1687.[2]

In connexion with this list it may be noted that it includes few romances of the three great matters, but quite a number of those belonging to the Matter of England. This helps to strengthen the presumption that few of the former have been lost, but that the extant romances based on native traditions represent only a very small fraction of those once current.

[1] *Clariodus* (Maitland Club 1830), pp. v-vi, 351.

[2] J. A. H. Murray, *The Complaynt of Scotlande* (EETS. ES. 17, 18), pp. 63 ff., and for identifications, pp. Ixxiii ff.

VII

SHORT NARRATIVE

ONE of the most surprising things in Middle English literature is the absence of the fabliau as compared with the numerous examples in French. Apart from those used by Chaucer there is, in the earlier period, only one such tale, *Dame Siriz.* It is difficult to believe with some scholars that this absence is due to any inherent strain of Puritanism; in fact there is a certain amount of evidence for the former existence of such stories. The number of moralized fabliaux extant perhaps presupposes earlier unmoralized versions, though it is not often that there is anything to indicate the language of these earlier versions. But, with regard to the *Conies Moralists* of Nicholas Bozon, there is good evidence that they are based on earlier versions in English. This is suggested by the English names of some of the characters, e.g. *Croket,Hoket* and *Loket* (p. 137), *William Werldeschame* and *Moalde Mikimisaunter* (p. 166), *Sterlyn* and *Galopyn* (p. 180). Since Bozon is writing in French the names would presumably have been in French had he invented them himself. The most plausible explanation for their presence in a French work is that they have been taken over from original versions in English. Moreover, English phrases appear in some of the tales, while English proverbs in prose or verse are not infrequent.[1] Similarly, English proverbs and occasional fragments of English verse are to be found in the collection

[1] Ed. P. Meyer & L. T. Smith (Paris 1889), pp. 12, 20, 23, 44, 78, no, 117, 145, 151.

of moral Latin stories edited by T. Wright for the Percy Society,[1] also perhaps indicating an English original for some of them. Again no doubt the 'cantilenas sive fabulas de amasiis vel luxuriosis' against which the University statutes of Oxford in 1292 warned the students were works of the fabliau type.[2] On the whole it is probable that the poverty of ME. in this kind of literature is more apparent than real. After all the fabliau is essentially a popular type of literature, and in the earlier period it would have little chance of being written down except in a moralized version.

Another type of short narrative in which Middle English literature is surprisingly deficient is the beast story. The lost collection of fables translated by Marie de France from English into French (see p. 73) certainly contained examples of this kind of story, but no English work comparable to the continental epic cycle of Reynard the Fox has survived. Before Caxton only three isolated episodes from this epic are known in English, the *Vox and the Wolf,* Chaucer's *Nuns' Priest's Tale,* and the 15th-century rhyme of the *Fox and the Geese,* beginning

> Pax nobis quod the Fox
> For I am comyn to toowne,

scribbled on a fly leaf of Royal 19 B iv, and not yet published. There is, however, a certain amount of evidence from carvings, &c., which seems to show that the beast epic was as popular in this country as on the continent, and it is probable that the absence of extant texts is due rather to accident than to lack of interest. In the catalogue of the library of Dover Priory, compiled by John Whytefeld in 1389, item 170 was a volume of miscellaneous tracts, including a *Fabula de Wipe medici in angl,* with the incipit 'Hit byful whylem'.[3] This is

[1] T. Wright, *Latin Stories* (Percy Society viii), pp. 24, 50, 52.
[1] *Munimenta Academica Oxon.* (RS. 50, i, 60).
[3] *Canterbury and Dover,* p. 460.

presumably a lost episode in English from the Reynard cycle. There are a number of tales which might fit such a title, and it is impossible to determine the exact one represented here.

A hint of another lost beast-tale in English is provided by one of the fables of Odo of Cheriton:

> Isengrim, penitent and lamenting for his past sins, wished to become a monk, and this was allowed. He received the tonsure and the cowl and other things pertaining to a monk. He was then placed in the school and taught in the first place to say the Pater Noster; but he replied, 'A lamb or a ram.' The monks taught him that he should look to the cross and to the sacrifice, but he always turned his eyes to the lambs and the rams.
>
> *Moral.* Many monks are like this. They always say, 'A lamb or a ram', that is, they ask for good wine and always have their eyes on a loaded tray or a heaped-up dish. Whence it is often said in English:
>
> If al that the Wolf un to a preest worthe,
> and be set un to book psalmes to lere,
> yit his eye is evere to the wodeward.[1]

The lines fall into passable alliterative verse, and there can be no doubt that Odo is quoting from some contemporary English poem, though the fact that slightly different versions of the English appear in the various manuscripts may indicate that it was extant only in oral form.

In Barbour's *Bruce* there is mention of the story of the fox and the fisherman, in terms which suggest that it was fairly well known at the time. Douglas is giving advice on the best way of attacking the English;

> Do we with our fayis tharfor — Nota. how the
> That ar heir Hand vs befor, — fox playt
> As I herd tell this othir zer — wyth the
> How that a fox did vith a fischer.[2] — fischar.

However nothing is known of any vernacular version of this

[1] L. Hervieux, *Les Fabulistes Latins* (Paris 1884) ii, 610-11; for variants see T. Wright, *Latin Stones* (Percy Society viii), pp. 55, 229, and *Speculum* ix, 219 n. 2.

[2] W. W. Skeat, *The Bruce* (EETS. ES. 11, 21,29,55) xix, 645 ff.

story, and a reference such as this is hardly proof of its existence.

Eight Breton lays, written at various dates, have been preserved in English, and there is some slight evidence for the existence of others. Marie de France is usually supposed to have been the first to versify the prose *contes* of the original lyrics, yet in one of her lays she seems to imply that other English versions of some of the Breton lays were extant,—possibly written even before her own translations into French. She speaks of an English lay named *Gotelef* as if she knew of its existence, though if it ever did appear in English it has long since been lost. In point of fact it is difficult to be certain that Marie is really speaking of an actual English work. In another of her lays she promises:

> Une aventure vus dirai,
> dunt li Bretun firent un lai.
> Laiistic a nun, ceo m'est vis,
> Si Papelent en lur pai's;
> ceo est *russignol* en Franceis
> e *nihtegale* en dreit Engleis.[1]

Here the author is merely giving the English and French equivalents of the Breton word, and does not suggest that lays with these names existed already in those languages. The same may be true of the former reference, though the words seem rather to favour the existence of an English lay. However it would be surprising if, contemporary with Marie de France, or even earlier, English versions of Breton lays were already in existence.

Throughout the medieval period the debate was a favourite form of literature, and a fair number of examples in English still exist. The most important of such debate poems in the earlier period is the *Owl and the Nightingale*, extant in two manuscripts, and with some evidence available for the former

[1] K. Warnke, *Die Lais der Marie de France* (Halle 1900), pp. 185, 146.

existence of at least one other. When the catalogue of the library of the Premonstratensian monastery at Titchfield was drawn up in 1400 one of the manuscripts, C II, included amongst its contents, *De conflictu inter philomenam et bubonem in anglicis.* This must have been a copy of the English poem, and the remaining contents of the manuscript show that it was not identical with either of the two extant manuscripts in which the poem has been preserved. A work on a similar subject, though presumably either in French or Latin, occurs amongst the list of books *in gallicis,* in the same library.[1] Further evidence for the popularity of debates between the Owl and the Nightingale is perhaps to be found in the late 13th-century treatise on the French language by Walter of Bibbesworth:

> Alotns ore iuer a boys,
> Ou la russinole, *the nithingale*
> Meuz chaunte ki houswan en sale *(houle).*[2]

However there are no means of telling whether this refers to some lost work on the subject, or is merely a testimony to the popularity of the extant English poem.

A debate poem preserved only in a French version is the *Geste de Blancheflour e de Florence,* the last stanza of which tells how it was translated into French by one Brykhulle from the English of a certain Banastre.[3] The Anglo-French work is a debate on the familiar question of whether a clerk or a knight is to be preferred as a lover. Little is known of the Banastre who is said to have been the author of the English original. A man of the name is noted as an English writer by Tanner, and in the *Scalachronica* there is mention of a William Banastre, along with Thomas of Erceldoun, in words

[1] *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical Society:* Literary and Historical Section, vol. v, part iii, pp. 150 ff.; part iv, pp. 252 ff.

[2] A. Owen, *Le Traté de Walter de Bibbesworth* (Paris 1929), p. no.

[3] *Romania* xxxvii, 209'.

which suggest that he, like Thomas, was a writer in English. These various Banastres may perhaps be identical, though the name is not uncommon.[1] A number of the possessors of the name are known, but there is hardly enough evidence to connect the writer of the lost English debate with any one of them.

The earliest known reference to the Robin Hood stories is usually assumed to be in the B Text of *Piers Plowman* (c. 1377), when Sloth says,

> I can ncazte perfitly my paternoster as pe prest it syngeth,
> But I can rymes of Robyn hood and Randolfe erle of Chestre
> (vv. 401-2).

In the Monkbretton *Chartulary*, however, in a document of 1322, appears a reference to 'the stone of Robin Hode'. This was in what is now Skelbroke township in the West Riding, its site corresponding with that of the present-day Robin Hood's Well. The correspondence suffices to associate the older place-name with the Robin Hood of the ballads, and not with some otherwise unknown individual who chanced to bear the famous name.[2] None of the extant Robin Hood ballads can be dated earlier than the end of the I5th century, yet here is evidence to show that the hero was already famous a century and a half earlier.

Nevertheless it seems to have taken him a considerable time to attract the notice of writers, and it is not until the 16th century that references to Robin Hood become at all frequent, showing that he has at last been accepted as a hero of romance. In the15th century he is known to the Scottish historians; for example, he is mentioned by Wyntoun (d. 1425).[3] In 1438 the *Aberdeen Manuscript Council Register*

[1] J. A. H. Murray, *Thomas of Erceldoune* (EETS. 61), p. xviii n. 1.
[2] *MLR.* xxviii, 484.
[3] F. J. Amours, *Wyntoun's Original Chronicle (STS.* 1902-14) v, 136.

has a case in which a ship called 'Robyne hude' or 'ly Robert hude' is concerned.[1] Bower (d. 1449) speaks of

> that most famous robber Robert Hode and Litill-John with their companions, at comedies and tragedies of whom the lazy mob gape, and of whose deeds minstrels and poets love to sing,

and he gives a story concerning the hero similar to the extant *Robin Hood and the Monk,* and obviously based on some lost ballad.[2] The English historians of the I5th century however have nothing to say of him, and the few references by English writers of this century come from elsewhere. Already at the beginning of the century he had become proverbial, and is mentioned in the *Reply of Friar Daw Topias:*

> And many men speken of Robyn Hood,
> And shotte nevere in his bowe.[3]

Chaucer has a similar proverb in *Troilus and Criseyde* (iii, 859-61), and although he himself makes no mention of Robin Hood, some of the scribes recognize the saying and supply glosses referring to the hero. In a lawsuit in 1428-9 the judge refers in an off-hand way to a ballad beginning ' Robin Hood in Barnesdale stood', which he evidently expected the court to recognize, but it cannot now be identified and has presumably been lost.[4] There may be some sort of connexion between this and the ballad of Robin Hood, now represented only by four lines in English followed by a Latin translation, which an unknown scribe scribbled in a MS. now preserved in the Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library:

[1] A. J. Mill, *Mediæval Plays in Scotland* (Edinburgh 1927), p. 23 n. 1.

[2] W. *Goodhall Johannis Forduni Scotichronicon* (Edinburgh 1759) ii, 104 ff.

[3] T. Wright, *Political Poems and Songs* (RS. 14, ii, 59).

[4] W. C. Holland, *A Manual of Year Book Studies* (Cambridge 1925), p. 107 n. 2.

Robyn Hod in Scherewod stod,
Hodud & hathud, hosut & schod.
Four and thuynti arowus he bar.
In hit hondus.

The handwriting, though difficult to date precisely, is said to be of the early 15th century.[1] Under the year 1439 the *Rolls of Parliament* tell of a certain Piers Venables who, 'in manere of Insurrection, wente into the wodes in that Contre, like as it hadde be Robyn-hode and his meyne'.[2] Under the year 1417 Stow noted the appearance of a malefactor calling himself Friar Tuck, though whether his source for this information was at all contemporary we do not know.[3] Sir John Paston, in 1473, writes to his brother lamenting the loss of a servant whom he had kept to play Robin Hood, and who, apparently taking his role too seriously, had imitated his exemplar by going off into Barnesdale forest.[4] In the 16th century references become very frequent and by this time there can be no doubt of the hero's fame.[5]

A story known only from an incidental reference in Ordericus is that of the giant Buamundus. Orderic is explaining why the name Bohemond was given to the son of Robert Guiscard:

> His own baptismal name was Mark, but his father, having heard the story of the giant Buamundus in the happiness of a feast, jestingly called his son by the giant's name.[6]

What the story of this giant may have been we do not know,

[1] *MLR.* xliii, 507-8. [2] *Rotuli Parliamentorum* v. 16.
[3] J. Stow, *Annales,* continued by E. Howes (London 1615), p. 352.
[4] J. Gairdner, *The Paston Letters* (London 1904) v, 185.
[5] On Friday, March 9, 1733, [a] certain William Alcock was executed at Northampton for the murder of his wife. 'On his way to the Gallows he sung part of an old Song *of Robin Hood,* with the Chorus, *Derry, derry, down,* &c., and swore, kick'd, and spurn'd at every Person that laid hold of the Cart' *(Gentleman's Magazine* iii, 154)-
[6] Ordericus iv, 212.

nor can we tell whether the stories were current only on the continent or whether they had made their way into England as well.

Two other heroes, little of whom is known but the names, are mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis. In the course of an attack on the sins of the clergy he likens some priests

> to the singers of fables and romances, who, seeing that the romance of Landericus does not please their audience, immediately begin to sing of Wacherius, if this does not please, of something else.[1]

Giraldus is here borrowing directly from the *Verbum abbreviatum* of Petrus Cantor,[2] except that the latter has *Narciso* instead of *Wacherio.* It has been suggested that Landericus is to be identified with Landri, count of Nevers, and that there evidently existed a chanson de geste telling of his adventures, known only in a Latin version. As for Wacherius Gaston Paris would identify him with Warocher the hero of *Reine Sebile.* Stories concerning these two were evidently current in 12th-century France, but whether they were known in England must remain doubtful.

A more humble subject of popular tales was a certain Einhard, a lay-brother of the Witham Carthusians. He had apparently been sent to assist new foundations in various parts of Europe, but on being ordered to Denmark rebelled and was expelled the order. After much suffering he was received again and, although apparently a centenarian, sent to the new foundation at Witham, where he became a celebrated character whose fame spread far beyond the walls of the monastery, and stories of whom in the vernacular were widely known throughout the countryside.[3]

It is only rarely that the titles of books mentioned in wills

[1] *Gemma Ecclesiastica,* p. 290.

[2] *Patrologia Latina* ccv, 101. See also *Romania* xxxii, i ff., where F. Lot gathers together the evidence for the existence of a French romance on Landri.

[3] *Magna Vita Sanctf Hugonis* (RS. **37, 217).**

are of much interest. John Raventhorp of York (1432) possessed a fair number of the usual type of religious books, and one which may have been more interesting. He leaves to Agnes de Celayne, along with various household goods, *librum Angliæ de Fabulis et Narractontbtis.*[1] The form *Angliæ* is suspicious and looks like a mistake for *Anglice.* If so, it is now impossible to say what the work could have been, though had it survived we should probably be disappointed, since it might have turned out to be some collection of moralized tales such as the *Gesta Romanorum.*

In 1402 Sir Edmund Mortimer was taken prisoner by Owen Glyndower. He was treated kindly by his captors, and rumours apparently got about that the captivity had not been unwelcome. As a result the king not only forbade the ransoming of Mortimer, but also confiscated his plate and jewels. Mortimer then made common cause with Glyndower and married his daughter, and the revolt of the Percies took place. The defeat at Shrewsbury changed the whole position, and gradually reduced Glyndower's revolt to its original character of a native Welsh rising against the English. From this point of view Mortimer's help was much less necessary, and he faded into the background. He was finally besieged by the forces of the king in Harlech castle and died during the siege. For us the important part of this is that Mortimer appears to have struck the imagination of his contemporaries to such an extent that his adventures are said to have been commemorated in songs:

> … my lord the said sir Edmund, whose father, the lord of Usk, gave me an exhibition at the schools, was by fortune of war carried away captive … At last, being by the English host beleaguered in the castle of Harlech, he brought his days of sorrow to an end, his wonderful deeds being to this day told at the feast in song.[2]

---

[1] *SS.* xxx, 29.

[2] E. M. Thompson, *Chronicon Adas de Usk* (London 1904), p. 246.

Neither Mortimer nor his adventures would appear to have been important enough for contemporary celebration, but a definite statement such as this can hardly be ignored. Presumably the songs told of Mortimer's adventures in the Welsh revolt, perhaps in English, perhaps in Welsh, more probably in both languages.

In a 13th-century lyric, *Annot and Johon,* the heroine in one of the stanzas is compared with heroes and heroines famous in legend and romance:

> He is medierne of miht mercie of mede
> Rekene ase *regnas* resoun to rede,
> Trewe ase *tegeu* in tour, ase *wyrwein* in wede,
> baldore pen *byrne pot* oft pat bor bede,
> Ase *wylcadoun* he is wys, dohty of dede,
> ffeyrore pen *floyres* folkes to fede,
> Cud ase *cradoc* in court carf pe brede,
> Hendore pen *hilde p*at hauep me to hede,
> he hauep me to hede pis hendy anon,
> gentil ase *ionas* heo ioyep wip Ion.[1]

Tentative identifications of most of these have been made. *Regnas* probably refers to some Old Norse legend since, in the *Orkneyingasaga,* are stories of the wise counsels of Ragna. *Tegeu,* according to the Welsh *Triads,* was one of the three chaste ladies and one of the three fair ladies of Arthur's court. She is also said to have been the wife of Karadawc Vreichvras and to have saved him from a serpent which had fastened upon him. *Wyrwein* may perhaps be Garwen, daughter of Henen Hen, and one of the three mistresses of Arthur. *Byrne* is obviously for Bjorn, and may refer to the hero of the *Orkneyingasaga* who holds the target for his brother Heming, a noted archer. *Wylcadoun* has not been identified, but is presumably some Celtic heroine. *Floyres* is the Floripas in *Sir Ferumbras* who had a magic girdle which exempted all who wore it from

[1] C. Brown, *English Lyrics of the XI11 th Century* (Oxford 1932), p. 138, and for identifications, pp. 226 ff.

the effects of hunger or thirst. *Cradoc*, who alone of Arthur's knights succeeded in carving the boar's head, appears in the ballad of the *Boy and the Minstrel Hilde* may be a reference to the widespread Hilde-Gudrun story, though the vague allusion here does not allow of any certain identification. *Jonas* may perhaps be the Jonaans who appears as one of the descendants of Celidoine, the first king of Scotland, in the *Queste del Saint Graal;* he is said to have gone to Wales and there to have married King Moroneu's daughter.

Here then we have a number of heroes and heroines, mainly Celtic and Scandinavian, referred to as if the author expected his readers to recognize the references immediately. Few of them appear in extant Middle English literature, and, although single references such as these can hardly prove the existence of written romances on them in the vernacular, it seems probable that stories of them were known in England at this period.

VIII

RELIGIOUS AND DIDACTIC LITERATURE

A CONSIDERABLE proportion of extant Middle English literature, more especially from the earlier part of the period, is didactic or religious in tone. The conditions of survival make this natural enough. Before the 14th century writing is in the hands of the monks or of professional scribes, and books written by them are destined for one or other of the great monastic libraries. It is true that occasionally the monks are found to be in possession of works which, theoretically, should not have been allowed in their libraries. But, on the whole, secular narrative and lyrical poetry are almost entirely absent, while religious and didactic works are prominent, as might be expected. The result is that this type of work in the vernacular had a much better chance of survival; it had a better chance of being written down and of then finding a safe and inconspicuous home. Yet, although it is probable that a much higher proportion of didactic and religious literature has survived, even so it is certain enough that a good deal has been lost.

Linguistically the most serious of such losses are probably the writings of a 12th-century northern monk. In the life of St Walthen by Jocelyn of Furness an account is given of a certain Brother Walter who, after the death of the saint, lost his faith through the wiles of the devil. St Walthen then appeared to him in a vision and reasoned with him, so that he was strengthened in the faith, and immediately began to compose a great number of religious works in English, in such noble verse that his hearers were frequently

reduced to tears.[1] From a literary point of view it is unlikely that the loss of Brother Walter's works is of much importance, but linguistically they would have added much to our knowledge of the northern dialect.

Sometime between 1140 and 12153 certain anchorite by the name of Hugh asked a priest called Robert for a rule. Robert replied that he had already 'been zealous in translating various passages from English books into Latin'.[2] In the context the wording suggests that Robert had already translated English rules into Latin, but if so it is difficult to identify his originals with anything now in existence. They could hardly have been the extant English translations of original Latin rules, e.g. of St Benedict or St Chrodegang, for the Latin originals of such rules would be available, and there would be no need for re-translation. The only extant rule composed originally in English, and probably during the second half of the 12th century, is the *Ancrene Riwle.* None of the extant manuscripts of the Latin translation of this work is earlier than the first half of the I4th century, and the English original is unlikely to have been written early enough for Robert to be its author. The evidence suggests that in the 12th century there existed religious writings in English of which no trace now remains.

Of one English work all that has survived is the title of a Latin translation of it. This is a work on the privileges of the church at Beverley, said to have been translated from an English original by the 12th-century chronicler Alfred of Beverley. The Latin version was contained in Cotton Otho C xvi, one of the manuscripts destroyed in the Cottonian fire, and only the title of the work now remains. However the extant work of this Alfred would hardly lead us to expect anything of much interest from his pen.[3]

[1] *ASS.*, August i, 272d. [2] *Continuity of English Prose,* p. xciii. [3] T. Wright, *Biographia Britannica Liter aria* (London 1846) ii, 158.

Fabyan mentions a book which, had it survived, would have been of considerable historical value:

(the names of the portgreves of London), of olde tyme, with the lawys and customys than vsed within this cytie, were regestryd in a boke called the Domysday, in Saxon tunge than vsed: but in later dayes, when the sayd lawes and customes alteryd and chaunged, & for consideracion also that the sayd boke was of small hande, & sore defaced, it was the lesse set by, so that it was enbesylyd, or loste; so that the remembraunce of suche rulers as were before the dayes of this Rycharde the first, whose storye shall nexte ensue, are loste and forgoten.[1]

Fabyan is not a particularly good authority for the existence of a book lost so long before his time, and he gives no source for his statement.

One of the most important Middle English historical works is John Harbour's *Bruce*. It appears, however, that Barbour was not the first, as he was certainly not the last, to treat of this subject. In the early 17th century a poem with the same title was composed by a certain Patrick Gordon and printed at Dortmund in 1615. In the preface the author speaks of an old

tome almost inlegeable in manie places, vanting leaves, yet hade it the beginning, and hade bein sett doune by a monk in the abey of Melros, called Peter Fenton, in the year of God one thousand thrie hundreth sixtie nyne … it was in old ryme like to Chaucer, but vanting in manie parts,—and in special from the field of Bannoch-burne fourth … so that it could not be gotten to the press, yet such as I could reid thereof hade many remarkable taillis worthie to be noted.[2]

Since Peter Fenton's work was 'in old ryme like to Chaucer' it must presumably have been in the vernacular. That being so, its loss has deprived us not only of a possibly valuable historical source, but also pf the earliest considerable work in the Scottish dialect.

Although the *Bruce* is the only work certainly by John

[1] Fabyan, p. 293.
[2] R. L. G. Ritchie, *The Buik of Alexander* (STS. 1925) i, civ.

Barbour which is still extant, other works, now lost, have been attributed to him. Wyntoun refers several times to Barbour's *Brut,* and the various references suggest that it was probably a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth, or at any rate based on his history. In the same chronicle appear references to a work on the genealogy of the Stewarts—the *Stewartis Oryginalle*—, and although some scholars take this to be an alternative title for the *Brut,* it is, on the whole, unlikely that the two works were identical.[1]

One of the most important religious figures of the 14th century was Richard Rolle of Hampole. Many of his vernacular writings have been preserved, yet in MS. Harl. 1706, containing other matter ascribed to Rolle, there is mention of a book by him 'cleped Toure of all Toures', all trace of which has long since vanished.[2] Another lost work by the same author may perhaps be referred to in a puzzling entry in the catalogue of Henry Saville of Banke (d. 1617), in which MS. 206 is described as containing 'A letter sent by Walter Hilton to a Gilbertine nun in which is expounded the order and rule which Richard of Hampole, at the request of the said lady translated from Latin into English'.[3] It is barely possible that one of Rolle's disciples lived to become a disciple of Hilton, but, if she did, nothing is known of the work referred to here. John Wyclif played an even more important part than Rolle had done in the religious life of his period. About the time when his personal influence was at its height, he issued a work called *The Thirty Three Conclusions on the Poverty of Christ,* which appeared in Latin as well as English, but of the two versions the Latin alone is extant today.[4]

[1] F. J. Amours, *Wyntoun's Original Chronicle* (STS. 1902-14) ii, 201; iii, 91, 247, 435; iv, 17, 21, 23; ii, 153, 315 v, 257.

[2] G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge 1933), p. 78 n. 5.

[3] H. E. Allen, *Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle* (London 1927), p. 410.

[4] H. B. Workman, *John Wyclif* (Oxford 1926) i, 312.

One of Wyclif's followers, a certain William Smith, got himself into trouble with the bishops in 1392 because of his unorthodox activities. Owing, it is suggested, to a disappointment in love, he had joined the Lollards of Leicester. On one occasion, when he was at an inn with a companion, they found themselves very hungry, with a supply of cabbages but no fuel with which to cook them. Thereupon they chopped up an old image of St Katherine which they found there, and used it as fuel. However this act was too offensive to local feeling and they were turned out of the inn. This took place in 1382, and ten years later Smith had to do penance for his deed. In addition he was compelled to hand over to the archbishop 'the religious works which he had written in English concerning the gospel and the epistles, and concerning various bishops', the compilation of which had occupied him for eight years.[1] If any of these English writings have survived they must now be included amongst the mass of anonymous literature produced by the Lollards. A later Lollard was less fortunate than Smith, and the proceedings for heresy against John Claydon of London, currier, tell of the many English books possessed by the accused, though the title of only one of them—the *Lanthorn of Light*—is given. This, together with the others, was ordered to be burned, and Claydon himself is said to have suffered at Smithfield in 1415. Incidentally it came out in his examination that Claydon could not read, and so could enjoy his library only by the help of others.[2]

Another reformer who suffered for his unorthodoxy was Reginald Pecock (1i39S?-i46o?), bishop of Chichester. Six of his English works still survive, but in them are references to the following books which do not now exist, the *Afore-Crier or Bifore-Crier, Book of Divine Office, Book of Learning, Book of Priesthood or of Priests' Power,* and the *Twelve*

[1] *Chronicon Henrid Knighton* (RS. 92, ii, 313).
[2] J. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (London 1837) iii, 531 ff.

Advantages of Tribulation. In addition there are references to another five lost works in Latin, and to twenty-five of which the language is uncertain. Consequently of the forty-one works by Pecock only six now survive, though it is only fair to say that the former existence of all the forty-one works is far from certain. Some are referred to as already written, some are to be written in the future, while the references to others are ambiguous. It is not improbable that some of the titles represent works which Pecock intended to write, but never did.[1]

Literature of a more orthodox type is noted in the *London Chronicle* which, under the year 1447-8, mentions the death of William Lichfeld 'pat made in his dayes M[iii] iiijxx and iij sermones, as it was founde in his bokes of his own hande writing'.[2] Many of these no doubt still survive, but certainly not all of them.

An extant Irish version of the *Harromng of Hell* is said to derive from a lost Middle English poem on the subject;[3] and Caxton, in his prologue to the *Eneydos*, mentions Skelton's translations of 'the epystlys of Tulle (i.e. Cicero) and the boke of dyodorus syculus'.[4] The latter of these still survives but not the former. The only one of Caxton's own works known to have been lost is his translation, from the French, of the life of Robert, Earl of Oxford, 'with diverse & many great myracles'.[5] At the end of the 15th century Gavin Douglas made a translation of Ovid's *De Remedio Amoris* which apparently has not survived.[6] Nor has Henry VIII's

[1] V. H. H. Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock* (Cambridge 1945), pp. 238 ff.

[2] C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford 1913), p. 296.

[3] R. Flower, *The Irish Tradition* (Oxford 1947), p. 130.

[4] W. J. B. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton* (EETS. 176), p. 109.

[5] O. Richardson, *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (EETS. ES. 44), p.3.

[6] J. Small, *The Works of Gavin Douglas* (Edinburgh 1874) i, cxxviii.

treatise on vocal prayer, which is said to have been praised by Wolsey.[1]

It might have been expected that medieval wills and the extant catalogues of monastic libraries would give valuable information about the lost religious and didactic literature. Both, however, are disappointing. A fair number of English books are mentioned in wills, but they are usually those which are still extant in numerous manuscripts. At other times the descriptions are so general that no identification is possible. Occasionally there are merely general bequests of English books with no titles given. So Lady Alice West (1395) bequeathes to her daughter Johanna 'alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch, and frensch',[2] and Sir Brian Roucliffe (1494-5) laves to his son John 'all my books in English, Latin and French'.[3] Similarly the stock of two grocers who became bankrupt in the 1390's contained two li*bros de Englysshe* valued at 8d.[4] The earliest mention of English books in a will occurs in that of Ralph Baldock, bishop of London (d. 1313). He left a number of ornaments and scholastic books to St Paul's, and amongst the latter was an *Expositio Anglice infortiati*.[5] The title is puzzling; normally the *Infortiatum* was a part of the Digest, a summary of the writings of the Roman jurists which formed the second part of the Corpus Juris Civilis. It is difficult to see how, at this date, there could have been any point in an English commentary on such a severely technical work, when any lawyer would read his law more easily in Latin than in English. If the title of the English work be given correctly it is unlikely

[1] H. M. Smith, *Pre-Refonnation England* (London 1938), p. 507.

[2] F. J. Furnivall, *The Fifty Earliest English Wills* (EETS. 78), p. 5. On bequests of books in wills, see *MLR.* xv, 349 ff.

[3] *SS.* liii, 106. See also A. Gibbons, *Early Lincoln Wills* (Lincoln 1888), pp. 26, 37, 45, 75, 89.

[4] S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago 1948), p. 162, and see also pp. 163, 248, 249.

[5] *HMC.*, 9th Report,, Appendix, p. 46.

that it had anything to do with the *Digestum Infortiatum,* nor is it possible to suggest an alternative subject. In 1346 Johanna de Walkyngham left 'a certain book written in English letters' to Walter of Creton, and since the greater number of books appearing in wills are devotional this was probably so too.[1] In 1361 Robert de Walcote, goldsmith, of London, leaves to 'John de Garyngton, Peter Hiltoft, and William Lytton respectively . . . three books of colour *(tres libros cqloris).*[2] The bequest sounds intriguing but probably means no more than three illuminated manuscripts, most likely in Latin.

In the 15th century English books appear more frequently. In 1404 Sir Lewis Clifford, the Lollard, mentions 'my book of tribulation', which, whatever it may have been, was most probably in English.[3] In 1433 Eleanor Purdeley, widow, of London, names various English books in her will, 'the Stotie of Josep, Patrikek purgatore, and ye sermon of altquyne'.[4] Alianora Roos of York (1438) leaves 'an English book called the first book of Master Walter', and 'a book called Maulde buke'.[5] The former of these was probably one of Hilton's works, but what the latter may have been we have no means of telling, though it was probably in English. In the will of Robert Norwich (1443) occur 'a paper book of the Household of the Duke of York, with other contents; and one little quire of paper, with the Kings of England versified . . . Also . . . one book called Hocclef'.[6] A 'jornenall that I bere in my slefe dayly' is mentioned in the will of Robert Constable of Bossall (1454).[7] A similar bequest occurs earlier in the will of Thomas

[1] *SS.* iv, 17.

[2] R. R. Sharpe, *Calendar of Witts . . . Court of Husting, London* (London 1890) ii, 25.

[3] N. H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta* (London 1826), p. 164.

[4] F. J. Furnivall, *op. cit.* (EETS. 78), p. 2.

[5] *SS.* xxx, 65.

[6] *Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society* iv, 332.

[7] *SS.* xxx, 176.

Polton (1435), who leaves to William Saunders 'a small lurnale which he himself wrote'.[1] The editor of the later will seems to take the 'jornenall' as being more or less equivalent to the modern journal, or diary; but the 'lurnale' of the earlier will was certainly nothing but a diurnal (a book of the daily offices), and probably this is too. In the course of an unusually long will John Baret of Bury (1463) leaves

x. marks to the peyntyng rerdoos and table at Seynt Marie avter of the story of Magnificat, that in caas be ye awter be seet aftir my entent, as is wretyn aftyr. And in the enner part of ye lowkys wtjnne there be wreten the balladys I made therefore, and the pardon wretyn there also . . . [to] Dame Jone Stoonys . .. mynbook of ynglych and latyn with diuerse maters of good exortacions, wretyn in papir & closed with parchemyn … to sere John Cleye . . . with my maister Prisote, my boke with the sege of Thebes in englysh.[2]

The *Siege of Thebes* was presumably Lydgate's work, but the 'balladys' have long since been lost. It is impossible to identify the work of 'ynglych and latyn', though it was probably devotional. In 1467 Arthur Ormesby made his will before setting out for the Holy Land. Only one of his books is said to contain anything in English, and this is 'my boke called boneaventure de vita christi and in the same boke a wark called speculum christianorum and in the end of the same an holy trete in English of contemplacon'.[3] Peter Arderne, a lawyer, seems to have possessed a fairly large number of books when he made his will in 1467, the English works including

. . . my boke of Legenda Sanctorum in Englissh; & my boke of Englissh called Bonnaventure de Vita & Passione Christi … my booke of English of Boys de Consolatione Philosophise, with the booke of Huntyng therm … a grete booke of Gramer, with the

[1] E. F. Jacob & H. C. Johnson, *Register of Henry Chichele* (Canterbury and York Society 1937) ii, 492.

[2] *Bury Wills and Inventories* (Camden Society 1850), pp. 15 ff.

[3] *Trans, Bib. Soc, vii* 116.

Sege of Troy, horded . . . my booke of ye Lyfe of Saint Thomas of Canterbury.[1]

The only interesting work here would have been that on hunting. In 1472 John Hamundson of York leaves to William Ledes 'a book of Chronicles in English, written on paper', and to Nicholas Benyngton 'a book called Horsehede'.[2] The English chronicle was probably some version of the *Brut*, and although the 'book called Horsehede' sounds more interesting it is likely that the title simply refers to a design stamped on the cover. An unnamed 'grete English boke' occurs in the will of Sir Thomas Lyttleton (1481),[3] and in the same year Margaret Purdans enumerates three English books, 'Le doctrine of the herte', an English book of St Bridget, and a book called 'Hylton'.[4] An unnamed book, which we know to have been in English only because of its incipit, *for as much*, is noted in the will of John Lese of Pontefract (1486), and similarly the incipit of the second folio, *karecteres*, of a manuscript left by Thomas Symson of York (1491) is all that there is to show that it was in English.[5] In 1493 a testator leaves 'my litill englissh booke like a prymer', though whether the likeness was in content or merely in size is not clear.[6]

So far mention has chiefly been made of those works which there is reason to believef are now lost, though the references considered above may sometimes have included copies of works still in existence. Naturally enough, a far greater number of wills show bequests of works still preserved in numerous manuscripts, though it is usually impossible to determine whether the particular manuscript mentioned is still in existence. The author whose works most frequently appear is Richard Rolle, whose writings, whether in Latin or

[1] *SS.* liii, 102 n.
[2] *SS.* xlv, 198 ff.
[3] N. H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta* (London 1826), p. 367.
[4] *Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society* iv, 335.
[5] *SS.* xlv, 220 n., 160 n.
[6] H. Littlehales, *The Prymer* (EETS. 105), p. xlii.

English, appear to have been popular and widespread. In 1391 Sir William de Thorp leaves an unnamed work of 'Richard Heremit',[1] and works by the same author appear in a volume containing treatises by John of Hoveden, Richard the Hermit, Walter Hilton, William Rymyngton and Hugh of St Victor, mentioned in the will of John Newton, treasurer of the Church of York (d. 1414).[2] Lord Scrope of Masham (1415) leaves a copy of Rolle's *Incendium Amoris,* an autograph copy of the same author's *Judica me Deus,* a manuscript of the *Pricke of Conscience,* and a Primer containing the Matins of the Blessed Virgin Mary in English'.[3] In the same year Edward Cheyne bequeathed a copy of Rolle's *Psalter,*[4] while in 1428 John Newton leaves to Nicholas Hulme the *Duodecim capitula,*[5] and thirty-one years later Hulme leaves the same book to Nicholas Blakwell.[6] In 1431 William Gate, chaplain, leaves to Richard Drax the *Lectiones Mortuorum* of Rolle; and in 1432 Robert Semer, sub-treasurer of the church of York, possessed a work on the *Placebo* and *Dirige* which he ascribed to Rolle.[7] In 1440 Robert Alne leaves to the library of York Cathedral a copy of Rolle's *Melum contemplativorum,* as well as a number of other books.[8] In 1446 Thomas Beelby of York leaves to William Duffield a copy of Rolle's *Psalter,* and an inventory of the goods of the same William Duffield, made in 1452, includes this book and a copy of the *Lectiones Mortuorum.*[9] An unnamed book by Rolle, as well as an English version of Boethius, was in the possession of John Seggefyld, fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, in I457,[10] while an inventory of the goods of

[1] A. Gibbons, *Early Lincoln Wills* (Lincoln 1888), p. 80.
[2] *SS.* iv, 364 ff.
[3] T. Rymer, *Foedera* (London 1729), ix, 276-7.
[4] E. F. Jacob & H. C. Johnson, *op.cit.* ii, 49.
[5] *SS.* ii, 77.
[6] *SS.* xxx, 219.
[7] *SS.* xlv, 58 n., 91 n.
[8] *SS.* xxx, 78 ff.
[9] *SS.* xlv, 133.
[10] *Munimenta Acadcmica Oxon.* (RS. 50, ii, 666).

Elizabeth, widow of William Siwardby, made in 1468, includes Rolle's *De Meditations Domini,* and English versions of the *Revelations of St Brigit,* the *Life of Christ,* and *De Misterio Passionis Domini.* Robert Est of York in 1474-5 claimed to possess the autograph copy of Rolle's *Psalter,* which he left to the nuns of Hampole, and in 1479 Thomas Pynchebek leaves to William Flawter Rolle's work on the *Dirige.*[1]

The *Pricke of Conscience,* often ascribed to Rolle, is another of the books frequently mentioned in wills.[3] In 1399 Thomas Roos of Ingmanthorp leaves to William de Helagh 'a book called Maundevyl, and a book (called) the Pricke of Conscience'.[3] It was included among the forfeited goods of Lord Scrope of Masham in 1415 ;[4] Thomas Harlyng possessed it in I422,[5] and in 1434 Robert Cupper of Yarmouth leaves it to his son.[6] Other copies of the book appear in the wills of William Revetour of York (1446), of Agnes Stapilton (1448) who has in addition at least two other English books, the *Chastising of God's Children* and the *Vices and Virtues,*[7] and finally in that of Stephen Preston of Sylton, Dorset, in 1474.[8]

Bequests of copies of Langland's *Piers Plowman* occur in at

[1] *SS.* xlv, 163, 160, 199 n.

[2] First mentioned in 1396-7 when the Prior of Newstead brought action against John Ravensfield for the detention of 'a book called Stymylus Conscientiae' (H. E. Allen, *Writings ascnbed to Richard Rolle* (London 1927), p. 384).

[3] *SS.* iv, 252.

[4] *Archaeologia* Ixx, 82.

[5] E. F. Jacob & H. C. Johnson, *op.cit.* ii, 246.

[6] *Norfolk and Norzvich Archaeological Society* iv, 326.

[7] *SS.* cxvi, 48 ff.

[8] *Collectanea Frandscana* ii, 107. According to Foxe (iv, 235) Richard Colins of Ginge (c. 1521) was accused before the bishop of Lincoln of having certain English books, among which was a book called the Trick of Conscience'. Further evidence for the popularity of the work is provided by the window of All Saints' Church, York, illustrating the Fifteen Signs before Judgment by pictures 'bearing as legends couplets from the *Prick of Conscience*' (H. E. Allen, *op.cit.,* p. 386).

least three wills, the earliest being that of Walter de Brugge of York in I396.[1] John Wyndhill, rector of Arncliffe (1431), leaves to John Kendale 'an English book of Pers Plughman', and to Robert Forest 'an English book concerning the exposition of the Gospels',[2] and there is a bequest of a 'book called piers plowman* in the will of Thomas Roos (1433).[3] Finally, on the fly-leaf of a copy of the *Summa dePenitentia* of Raymond de Pennaforte is an inventory of the books of Thomas Stotevyle, drawn up in 1459-60. The list comprises forty books, amongst which were *Narradones Cantuarienses* and *Petrus Plowman* as well as various romances, *Alisaundir, Befuitz de Hamton, Le Sege de lerusakm, Le Sege de Troye,* one or more of which were perhaps in English.[4]

The works of Chaucer and Gower appear fairly frequently in 15th-century wills. The earliest occurrence of the former seems to be in the will of Richard Sotheworth,proved 20 May 1419, who leaves to John Stopyndon 'my book of Canterbury Tales'.[5] John Brynchele, citizen and taylor of London, in 1420 leaves to David Fyvyan 'a book in English called Boecius de Consolacione Philosophic', and to William Hoigrave 'my book called Talys of Caunterbury'.[6] Another copy appears in the will of Sir Thomas Cumberworth (1450), whose books also included 'my boke of actif life', 'my boke of uesseden Passion', 'my boke de vita christi', as well as an English translation of William Deguilleville's *Pelerinage de l'Ame*, and an unnamed book from the recently suppressed of Grace Dieu in Leicestershire.[7] Another of Chaucer's works is noted in the will of William Banks of York (1458)

Version of *Ame*, and an unnamed book from the recently suppressed

[1] *SS.* iv, 209. [2] *S3.* **xxx,** 32 ff.

[3] F. J. Furnivall, *op.cit.,* p. 2.

[4] J. M. Manley & E. Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales* (Chicago 1940) i, 610 ff.

[5] J. M. Manley & E. Rickert, *op.cit.* i, 606.

[6] F. J. Furnivall, *op.cit.,* p. 136.

[7] A. Clark, *Lincoln Diocese Documents* (EETS. 149), pp. 45 ff. For the *Grace Dieu* see HMC., 6th Report, Appendix, p. 288.

who leaves to Elena Marshall 'an English book called Trolias',[1]

to Thomas Stotevyle. In 1471 Lady Elizabeth Bruiyn of S. Ockenden, Essex, has, among other bequests, one of 'the boke called canterbury tales'.[2] Again, according to the will of William Knoyell (1501):

> As for a book called Bocas I wol that my son have him during his life and to leave him in the place for his heirs for evermore and the book of Canterbury talys I will he be delivered to my cousyn William Carraunt for I had him of his grauntfader.[3]

The grandfather referred to was probably William Carraunt, a squire in the royal household, who died in 1476. John Parmenter, commissary of the archbishop of Canterbury, leaves to Walter Nonne 'a book called Canterbury Tales' (1479). In an inventory of the goods of Sir Thomas Ursewyk (d. 1479) is a short list of the books in his chapel which included 'an Englysch boke called Maundevyle', and 'an Englysche boke of Canterbury Talys';[4] and among the household goods confiscated from Sir Thomas Charlton were three English books, a *Canterbury Tales,* a 'troyles', and a version of *De regimine principum.*[5] In 1495 Richard Dodyngton bequeaths a "Book of Canterbury Taylles'; and on the fly-leaf of MS. Royal 15 D ii a list of books in a 15th-century hand, probably belonging to John, Lord Welles (d. 1499), or to his wife Cecilia (d. 1507), includes,

A boke of caunturbere tlase.
A boke of Charlman.
A boke cald ye sheys of Jerusalem.
A boke cald mort arthre.[6]

---

[1] *SS.* xxx, *217* ff.
[2] *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* (NS) ii, 56-7.
[3] *Somerset Record Society* xvi, 19-21.
[4] J. M. Manley & E. Rickert, *op.cit.* i, 615, 616.
[5] S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago 1948), p. 248.
[6] J. M. Manley & E. Rickert, *op.cit.* i, 618.

John Goodyere of Monken Hadley (1504) refers to 'a boke of regimine principum' in parchment, 'a boke of dives et pauper in printe', a book of 'the Knyght of the Tower' in print, the 'Canterbury Tales' in parchment, 'an old boke of the cronycles of yngeland', 'an olde boke of bonaventur', and a 'queyr of phisick of the secrets of women'.[1] Finally, in 1501, Thomas Horde leaves to a certain Rowland 'An English boke of Caunturbury tallys' and Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond (d. 1509) leaves 'a booke of velom of Canterbury tales in Englische'.[2] Some of the manuscripts mentioned here have certainly been lost, and although others are probably to be identified with one or other of the extant manuscripts it is seldom that confirmation is available.

In 1431 John Morton of York leaves to the countess of Westmorland 'an English book, called Gower', which was presumably the *Confessio Amantis*[3] Similarly two books by the same author are mentioned in the will of Sir Edmund Rede (1487), though with no indication as to which were intended.[4]

English versions of the whole, or part, of the Bible are occasionally found, as in the will of Robert de Felstede, of London, in 1349, which mentions a book called 'le Byble' and a psalter written in Latin and English.[5] The first of these was probably in French; the *Psalter* seems to be too early to be the work of Rolle and is possibly a copy of the extant West Midland *Psalter*. In 1392 Robert de Roos leaves to his daughter Alianora a 'BibylP of which the language is not specified, but since most of the other works mentioned in the will are in French this also may have been. John Hopton possessed an English version of the *Gospels* in 1394; and the

[1] *Trans. Bib. Soc.* vii, 111.
[2] J. M. Manley & E. Rickert, *op.cit.* i, 620, 621.
[3] *SS.* **xxx,** 13 ff. [4] *Trans. Bib. Soc.* vii, 117 ff.
[5] R. R. Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills . . . Court of Husting, London* (London 1889) i, 636.

English *Psalter* possessed by Isabella Persay of York in 1401 was probably that ascribed to Rolle.[1] Another English copy of the *Gospels* was left by John Bount of Bristol in I404;[2] the books of John Clifford, mason, of Southwark, in 1411 included a copy of the Gospels for Sundays in English,[3] and a further copy appears in the will of William Revetour. Works derived from the Bible are occasionally to be met with. The *Vita Christi* occurs in the wills of Thomas Horneby (1485), and William Ward (1496),[4] whilst the 'boke of Bonaventure and Hilton in the same in Englishe' mentioned in the will of Cecily, duchess of York (1495), may have been the same work.[5] Finally, in 1502, Robert Battresby, clerk, leaves a book called 'The Life of Jesu' to the common library of the University of Cambridge,[6] and a similar book is listed in the inventory of the goods of Elizabeth Siwardby (1468).

English versions of the *Legenda Sanctorum* appear in the wills of Thomas Berkley (1415),[7] William Revetour (1446), William Bruyn (1477),[8] and Ann, duchess of Buckingham.[9] *Grace Dieu,* the usual title given to the English translation of William Deguilleville's *Pelerinage de l'Ame,* occurs in the wills of Sir Thomas Cumberworth (1450), John Clerk (1451) and Thomas Cheworth (1458). A devotional book on the Pater Noster is bequeathed by Sir John Scrope in I4SS,[10] and a book on the same subject by John Burn of York in 1479-8o.[11]

[1] *SS.* iv, 179, 196, 271. See also A. Gibbons, *op. cit.,* p. 118.
[2] T. P. Wadley, *Notes on Wills in the Great Orphan Book and Book of Wills* (Bristol 1886), p. 73.
[3] C. L. Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise in XV th Century England* (Oxford 1925), p. 40.
[4] *SS.* xlv, 165 n.; liii, 114.
[5] *Wills from Doctors' Commons* (Camden Society 1862), pp. 1 ff.
[6] N. H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta* (London 1826), p. 444.
[7] E. F. Jacob & H. C. Johnson, *op.cit.* ii, 124.
[8] *Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society* iv, 335.
[9] N. H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta* (London 1827), p. 356'.
[10] *SS.* xxx, 151, 190. [11] *SS.* xlv, 199 n.

The Chastising of God's Children occurs in the wills of Mercy Ormesby (1451)[1] and Agnes Stapilton (1448), while Lady Peryne Clanbowe (1422) bequeaths to Elizabeth loye la booke of Englyssh, cleped "pore caytife" '.2 The works of Hilton are not infrequent in wills. They have appeared in some of those already mentioned, and in the will of Robert Wolveden (1432), treasurer of the church of York, there is a reference to 'a devout work written by Walter Hilton'.[3] Gilemota Carreeke of York (1408) leaves to Alice, daughter of William Bows, 'an English book de Spiritu Guidonis'.[4] The *De consolatione philosophiae*, perhaps in the translation by Chaucer, appears in the wills of John Brynchele (1420), John Seggefyld (1457) and Peter Arderne (1467). In 1493 Roger Drury of Hawstead leaves 'ij. Inglyshe bocks, called Bochas, of Lydgat's makyng'.[6] A copy of Mandeville appears in the will of George Darell (1432),[6] though with no indication of the language in which it was written, as also in the will of Thomas Roos (1399), and the inventory of the goods of Sir Thomas Ursewyk (1474). In 1467 Robert Skrayngham bequeaths a 'great English book called Polycronicon' to another merchant;[7] the will of John Fell of York (1506) includes a book of chronicles,[8] probably some version or other of the *Brut*, and others appear in the wills of Thomas Cheworth (1458) and John Hamundson (1472).

Perhaps the most disappointing sources for our knowledge of the lost literature are the extant catalogues of monastic and other libraries. The catalogues vary considerably in the care with which they were compiled, and so in the amount of detailed information which they give. If a manuscript was

[1] *Trans. Bib. Soc.* vii, 116.
[2] F. J. Furnivall, *Fifty Wills* (EETS. 78), p. 50.
[3] *SS.* xlv, 91 ff. [4] *SS.* iv, 352.
5 *Bury Wills and Inventories* (Camden Society 1850), p. 246.
[6] *SS.* **xxx,** 28.
[7] C. L. Kingsford, *op.cit.*, p. 41. [8] *SS.* liii, 244.

mainly or entirely in French or English we are usually so informed; but very frequently the different contents of the manuscript are not noted, and it may be listed only under the first or the most important of the treatises which it contains. In such cases there may be quite a number of less important works in English of which the compiler gives no hint. Moreover, when an English item is specifically mentioned, the description is often so vague that it is difficult to say whether it is a version of an extant work or something that has been completely lost. From the 12th century eight catalogues, fragmentary or complete, of important monastic libraries have been preserved,[1] but on the whole they give little in* formation about Middle English works. This is not surprising; books written in English during the first half of the century would be in the traditional West Saxon literary dialect, and so would come under Old English. As for the books written towards the end of the century only very occasional ones could have found their way into a monastic library early enough to be entered in a catalogue of the same century.

During the 13th century, and especially towards the end of it, extant catalogues tend to become more elaborate and detailed, but vernacular works are still usually in Old, not in Middle, English. A fragmentary catalogue of Bury shows only two English works, of which one is certainly and the other probably Old English. That of Rochester, drawn up in 1202, notes again two of the Old English manuscripts mentioned in the earlier catalogue, together with an additional English work, probably also in Old English. Similarly St Paul's (1245) mentions only two Old English bibles. The catalogue of Glastonbury (1247) notes eight manuscripts in English, but the only one that can be identified is in Old English, and as most of the others are marked 'old but legible' or 'old and illegible', it is likely that they too were

[1] Peterborough, Rochester, Whitby, Christ Church, Welbeck, Durham, Burton, Reading.

in Old English. The 13th-century catalogue of Leominster, apart from the work on St Guthlac, has only

> Medicinalis unus anglicis litteris scriptus . . .
> Liber qui appellatur landboc . . .[1]

The former was presumably a version of one of the late Old English medical treatises, and the latter a cartulary not necessarily in English at all. The early 13th-century catalogue of Flaxley shows the following English works:

> 69-70. Duo libri anglici . . .
> 73. Phisicus liber, anglice . . .[2]

The second of these was probably a version of one or other of the extant Old English medical works; as for the first all that can be said is that the two books are not to be found among the extant manuscripts known to be from Flaxley Abbey. A similar indefinite entry, 'Libri de littera Anglica duo', lists the only English books given as being in the library of Rievaulx.[3] The late 13th-century catalogue of the abbey of St Radegund at Bradsole shows no English works,[4] nor does the fragmentary one of the same date from Ramsey.[5]

During the 14th century the catalogue of the Exeter Cathedral Library (1327) notes only three manuscripts as being in English, or as containing English works. Of these one is certainly Old English and the others were probably so. An indenture (1343) to secure the return of books lent by the prior and convent of the Hinton Charterhouse to another religious house lists about a score of books, but there is no evidence that any of them contained English writings.[6] The extant catalogue of the Austin friars at York (1372)

[1] *EHR.* iii, 117ff.
[2] *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* ix, 205-7.
[3] E. Edwards, *Memoirs of Libraries* (London 1859) i, 337.
[4] *EHR.* liii, 88 ff.
[5] *Chronicon Abbatiæ Rameseiensis* (RS. 83, Ixxxv-xci).
[6] E. M. Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London I930), p. 323-

certainly shows no important works in English; there may have been English items in two of the manuscripts, No. 366 which contained a *geometria wlgaris,* and No. 452 which had *tractatus paruus de wlgari Judicio sermonis,* but both have been lost.[1] Amongst the chained books in the chapel of St George at Windsor, when the catalogue was drawn up in 1384-5, there were two French books, the *Romance of the Rose* and probably *Percival and Gawain,* but none in English.[2] The catalogue of Dover Priory (1389) shows English items in one manuscript only, a lost episode from the Reynard cycle, mentioned above, and a lost copy of the *Proverbs of Hending.* The 1391 catalogue of Durham notes only two English works, one certainly and the other probably in Old English, while the library of Christ Church, Canterbury in the early I4th century possessed a considerable number of Old English works, but only one in Middle English, a version of the *Poema Morale,* catalogued as 'Rithmus Anglice', in what is now Bodl. Digby 4.[3] A fragmentary early 14th-century catalogue, possibly from the Cluniac priory of Bermondsey, contains no English works specifically mentioned as such. However, the compiler does not appear to have been particularly conscientious since he notes that, in addition to the books catalogued, the monastery possessed some eighty books or parts of books whose contents he does not trouble to give.[4] The 14th-century catalogue of Lanthony mentions nothing in English, but gives only the main item of each volume without detail.[5] A fragmentary 14th-century catalogue of Ramsey shows only a single English work, probably a copy of the *Chronicle.* Apart from an English life of St Thomas Becket, mentioned earlier, the late 14th-

[1] *Fasciculus J. W. Clark dicatus* (Cambridge 1909), pp. 2-96.
[2] *Trans. Bib. Soc.* xiii, 55. .
[3] *Canterbury and Dover,* p. 92.
[4] *EHR.* xlviii, 431 ff.
[5] *Centralblatt fur Bibliothekswesen* ix, 207 ff.

century catalogue of Peterborough shows only some English proverbs in one of the manuscripts. But the cataloguer also notes that there were in the library 'a few books which had not been examined', at least one of which must have been in English since the Peterborough copy of the *Chronicle* finds no place in the catalogue.[1]

The earliest of the extant 15th-century catalogues is that of Titchfield, drawn up in 1400. In addition to a lost copy of the *Owl and Nightingale* and an English collection of saints' legends the library contained only *De die iudicii in anglicis* in Q XI, presumably a version of one or other of the Middle English poems which treat of the *Fifteen Signs before Judgment,* or something similar. The 1416 catalogue of Durham contains only one Old English book, and a list of the books in the Cambridge University Library (c. 1424) shows a *Fasciculus Morum* which, judging from the incipit to the second folio—*Lest ye ofte*—, contained some English at any rate.[2] The imperfect catalogue of Hulne Priory (1443) shows no English books,[3] nor do any appear in the 1448 catalogue of Elsyngspital.[4] An inventory of the goods of Sir John Fastolf (c. 1450) shows a number of books said to be in French, but some of these were almost certainly in Latin and others may perhaps have been in English.[5] Ewelme Almshouse, in 1466-7, possessed four French books but only one in English—a copy of Lydgate's *Pilgrimage.*[6] No English books are to be found in the 1499 book list from the Collegiate Church of St Andrew at Bishop Auckland,[7] or in the early 15th-century catalogue of Meaux Abbey.[8] When the catalogue

[1] *Trans. Bib. Soc.,* Supplement v.
[2] *Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Communications* ii, 239 ff.
[3] *SS.* vii, 128 ff.
[4] J. P. Malcolm, *Londinium Redivivum* (London 1803) i, 27 ff.
[5] *HMC., 8th Report,* Appendix, pp. 268.
[6] *HMC., 8th Report,* Appendix, p. 629.
[7] *SS.* ii, 101.
[8] *Chronica Monasterit de Melsa* (RS. 43, iii, Ixxxiii).

of the College of St Mary, Winchester, was drawn up, sometime during the reign of Henry VI, there was, among the grammatical books:

> . . . liber continens quandam compilationem de informatione puerorum, cum aliis parvis tractatibus, 20 folio, *Ablatyf cas,* in Anglice. . . -[1]

No complete catalogue of the library of the Witham Charterhouse exists, but Laud 154 contains three lists of books which were to be found there in the i5th century. The first two comprise, in duplicate, a list of 24 books given to the Charterhouse by John Blacman. English works appear in two of the books, a *devota meditacio in anglicis* in No. 15 and a *tractatus de armis in anglicis* in No. 23.[2] The second of these might have been interesting, but was most probably merely an English version of Vegetius. The third list contains another 44 volumes, also probably given by Blacman, but the contents of the manuscripts are not detailed and no English works are noted. A 15th-century catalogue of an unknown English religious house gives no works as definitely in English, although one of them, entitled *Milk et breed,* certainly was since this is a not unusual title for Chaucer's *Astrolabe.* As this work is not specifically noted as being in English, it is possible that other works in the library may have been in the same language.[3] The late 15th-century catalogue of St Augustine's, Canterbury, had so far as we can tell four works in English. Two of them were certainly in Old English, the *Gesta Guydonis* is dealt with elsewhere, and the remaining item is the extant Arundel 57 containing Michael of Northgate's *Azenbite of Inwyt.*[4]

Naturally enough, comparatively few catalogues are extant from the 16th century. The library of the Augustinian Abbey at Leicester contained over a thousand volumes when the

[1] *Archaeological Journal* xv, 59 ff.
[2] E, M. Thompson, *op.cit.,* pp. 316 ff., 320 ff.
[3] *MLN.* liv, 246 ff. [4] *Canterbury and Dover,* p. 374.

catalogue was drawn up, but of these only a single unnamed tract in a volume of medical treatises was in English.[1] No complete catalogue of the library of the London Charterhouse is extant, but various lists survive of books which were sent from there at different times to other Charterhouses. The most interesting of these is a certificate for 24 books carried away from the House of the Salutation, sometime during the 16th century, by John Spalding on his return to the Charterhouse at Hull. The list contains several works which the title or the incipit to the second folio show to have been in English. Amongst these were the *Chastising of God's Children,* the *Pilgrimage of the Soul, Speculum vite Christi,* the *Book of Good Manners,* Hampole's *Meditacifypassionis Christi,* the *Meditacio Sancti Augustini,* as well as English versions of the *Acts* of the Apostles, and the *Epistles* of St Paul, together with a *Psalter* glossed in English, 'parte of the statutis in yngleshe', and an unnamed treatise by Rolle. Some of these are certainly still extant, and it is probable that versions of most of them are to be found in extant manuscripts. Three other lists of books sent from the same monastery also survive, but in none is there mention of works in English.[2] An inventory of the goods of Exeter Cathedral, drawn up in 1506, includes also the library of some 600 volumes, but the only one of these mentioned as in English is *Bocas in Sermone Anglico,* which was presumably Lydgate's translation. In addition, *30 libri antiqui* are mentioned as *in antiquo scaccario,* and possibly some of the English books which appear in the 1327 catalogue were included among them.[3]

The most elaborate of the 16ttf-century catalogues is that

[1] *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society* xix, 2 ff., 378 ff.

* E. M. Thompson, *op.cit.,* pp. 323-30.

[8] G. Oliver, *Lives' of the Bishops of Exeter* (Exeter 1861), pp. 366-75-

of the Brigettine monastery at Syon. The order was a double one, and there appear to have been separate libraries for the men and for the women, the extant catalogue being that of the men's library. It was a large, but comparatively uninteresting, collection of about 1,500 volumes, more than a quarter of which were printed books. The following English works are to be found in manuscripts or printed books which are not now extant: various grammatical (A 4, A 34) and medical works (B 5, 6, 29, 31,40,43); a glossed *Psalter* (F 48) and Bible (R 2); tracts on the Seven Deadly Sins (L 43, N 28); the Seven Penitential Psalms (M 15) and the Ten Commandments (N 28). Hilton's works appear in M 24 and 97, and one of Rolle's in M 118, the *Revelations of St Matilda* in M 98, and collections of sermons in N 35, S 57, 58. In addition there are various saints' lives. The original index to the catalogue gives a few English works which are not in the catalogue proper, notably the sermons of Brother Roger of Syon and an English version of one of the works of Aquinas.[1] Many of these works are probably extant in other manuscripts, and none of them sounds particularly interesting. In fact the whole library, though no doubt adequate enough, sounds rather dull. Also from the16th century is an anonymous inventory which shows two English books, both in print, a *Speculum Vitae Christi,* and another with the probably miswritten title *Earth' et Ants in Anglicis Ethimolog*[2]

It is unfortunate that complete catalogues of the monastic libraries were not made at the time of the dissolution, or, if made, that they have not survived. We are probably too apt to assume that the dissolution dealt an irreparable blow to our knowledge of medieval literature. There is certainly evidence enough for the wanton destruction of immense numbers of manuscripts at that time, but the extant monastic

[1] M. Bateson, *Catalogue of the Library of Syon Monastery, Isleworth* (Cambridge 1898).

[2] *SS.* liii, 280.

catalogues do not indicate that these libraries had much to lose that was of any great interest. More especially it is doubtful whether they ever contained much in the vernacular. In fact, it might even be possible to say that what little has survived owes its preservation to the fact that at the dissolution it passed into the hands of laymen. The later monastic catalogues almost invariably include. fewer English works than do the earlier ones. In the 16th century vernacular writings begin to appear again, but they are usually more or less contemporary. On the whole it seems very probable that much of the lost Old and Middle English literature had already disappeared long before the dissolution. There is, of course, far too little evidence for any certainty on the point to be possible. We have no means of telling whether the monastic catalogues which happen to have been preserved are at all representative, nor can we even be certain that these catalogues listed all the books in the possession of the monastery. As at Exeter, the older books may still have been preserved but, since they were now almost unintelligible, have been withdrawn from circulation, and not entered in detail in the catalogue. Whatever the reason for it, a perusal of the extant catalogues does give the impression that the later the catalogue the fewer the English books which will be found in it. This is especially noticeable when we have catalogues of different dates for one and the same library. The early 12th-century catalogue of Durham shows some ten English books, none of which can be identified with the single one appearing in the 1391 and 1416 catalogues. In the 12th century Peterborough possessed at least two Old English books, neither of which appears in the late 14th-century catalogue. Exeter, in 1327, possessed three books with English works in them, none of which is to be found in the inventory of 1506. The question might have been settled had Henry's commissioners been as interested in the manuscripts as in the other goods of the monasteries. Leland usually

noted down some of the more interesting of the books which he saw, but he never appears to have made any exhaustive catalogues. The only monasteries for which we have any information at all are those of Monkbretton and Kilburn. In the case of the former the greater part of the library seems to have been acquired by the prior and sub-prior, and in 1558 an inventory was drawn up which shows the whereabouts of some of the books. William Brown, formerly prior, possessed 37 volumes, of which four were probably in English, *Legenda Anglicana, Legenda Aurea in englysche, Flowr of Comawndments* and *Ye pylgramage of perfeccyon.* Thomas Wylkynson and Richard Hinchclyf had acquired over a hundred volumes, apparently from Thomas Frobyscer, formerly sub-prior, but only two of them appear to have been in English, *Scala perfections* and *Schepard Kalendare.*[1] So that out of nearly 150 volumes only six were possibly in English, and none of these was of any age. In the inventory of Kilburn Nunnery the only books mentioned, apart from service books, are 'two bookes of Legenda Aurea, the one in prynt, and the other wryten, both Englyshe'.[2] Such evidence as this is practically valueless. We cannot be certain that we have a complete catalogue of the books possessed by either monastery, and two small and comparatively unimportant houses such as these could hardly be considered representative. In all probability the question is one that can never be definitely answered, but on the whole it may be suspected that the loss of much medieval literature in the vernacular is one of the disasters for which Henry VIII was not directly responsible.

[1] J. W. Walker, *Chartularies of MonkBretton Priory* (Yorks. Arch. Soc.: Record Series Ixvi), pp. 5 ff.

[2] *Monasticon* iii, 424.

IX

LYRICAL POETRY

NO lyrical poetry has survived before the 13th century, and most of the early lyrics are religious—as we should expect from the conditions of survival. Nevertheless there is evidence enough for a flourishing lyrical literature, both religious and secular, from a much earlier period than this. If the 12th-century chronicler of Ely could be trusted we should be able to claim Cnut as the first known composer of lyrical poetry in English. According to the story, the king, while on a journey by water to Ely, heard the chanting of the monks, and immediately composed verses on the subject:

> Merie sungen oe Muneches binnen Ely.
> oa Cnut ching reu o'er by.
> Roweo cnites noer the land,
> and here we pes Muneches sæng.

and other verses which follow, which even to the present time are still sung publicly in dances and remembered in the sayings of the wise.[1]

Although the anecdote may leave us sceptical about Cnut's claim to be the first lyrical poet in English, it is clear enough proof that lyrical poetry existed at least as early as the i2th century, and possibly a good deal earlier. Thomas of Bayeux, archbishop of York (d. 1100), is said to have composed many hymns, and to have provided pious sentiments for the tunes of the minstrels.[2] It is unlikely that any of the archbishop's

[1] *Liber Eliensis,* p. 202. [2] *Gesta Pontificum,* p. 258.

songs were in English; they would presumably be in Latin, though the songs of the minstrels, whose tunes he borrowed, were probably in one of the vernaculars.

Perhaps the man with the best claim to be considered the earliest known lyrical poet in English is St Godric of Finchal. In his early days the saint had travelled widely as a merchant and pilgrim, but eventually settled down as a hermit at Finchal. After his death his biography was written by Reginald, a monk of Durham, and in it he gives examples of the saint's lyrical poetry, the gift of which had come to him through divine inspiration. According to Reginald, the Virgin, accompanied by St Mary Magdalene, appeared in a vision to Godric in the chapel which he had dedicated to her at Finchal, and taught him the words and melody of an English hymn:

> Sainte Marie virgine,
> Moder Jesu Christes Nazarene,
> on-fo, scild, help pin Godric;
> on-fang, bring ezhtlech wio pe in Godes riche.

The story was known to Roger of Wendover who gives a slightly different version of the stanza, as well as an additional four lines:

> Seinte Marie, Christes hour,
> Meidenes clenhed, moderes flour,
> Delivere mine sennen, regne in min mod,
> Bringe me to blisse wit thi selfe God.

Reginald also tells how, on the death of Godric's sister Burgwen, the saint, wishing to know what judgment had been passed on her, saw in a vision the Virgin followed by two angels bearing the soul of his sister, who sang to him a hymn in English. Reginald gives two lines of this hymn:

> Crist and Seinte Marie, sio on scamel me iledde,
> thaet ic on this hi-herthe ne squlde uuit mine bare fot itreide.[1]

[1] *SS.* **xx,** 119, 144; RS. 84, i, 72 ff.

A later biographer, Geoffrey of Durham, gives a single stanza of a hymn to St Nicholas:

> Sainte Nicholaes godes druo.
> tymbre us faire scone hus.
> At p*i* burth at pi bare.
> Sainte nicholaes, bring vs wel pare.[1]

These three fragments are all that remain of the saint's lyrics, and they happen to have been preserved only because the biographers were interested in the circumstances of their composition.

The poetry of Thomas of Bayeux and of St Godric was religious, but other lyrical poetry current in the 12th century was certainly secular. The songs which welcomed Richard I to Acre were certainly secular, but probably in French.[2] Also secular, and almost certainly in English, were the songs of the youths who immediately preceded Thomas Becket, while Chancellor, on his splendid progress to the French court.[3]

Most of the references to the lost lyrical poetry are of a general kind, but occasionally odd lines or even stanzas have been preserved. As a rule such lyrics would, of course, be in rhyme, after the fashion of the French lyrics, though it is clear enough that alliterative poetry also continued to be composed.[4] Giraldus Cambrensis, in the *Gemma Ecclesiastica,* has a chapter condemning the dancing or singing of songs in churches or churchyards; and that such songs were sometimes in English is proved by an illustrative anecdote. It appears that a certain parish priest in Worcestershire was on one occasion kept awake the whole night by revellers dancing in the churchyard. The result was that next morning, when he began the usual service, instead of the correct *Dominus vobiscum,* he commenced to sing the refrain which had been

[1] See J. Hall, *Early Middle English* (Oxford 1920) i, 5; ii, 241 ff.
[2] T. Gale, *Historic Anglicanae Scriptores* (Oxford 1687) ii, 331-2.
[3] William FitzStephen, *Vita Sancti Thomas* (RS. 67, iii, 31).
[4] *Descriptio Kambrife,* pp. 187 ff.

ringing in his ears all night, *Swete lawman dhin are*. The event caused such a scandal that the then bishop of Worcester pronounced an anathema upon any person who should ever again sing that song within the lipnits of his diocese. Elsewhere the same writer gives a rhyming toast, which he says was common amongst the English Cistercians. The proposer of the toast, instead of the usual *wesseil*, says

Loke nu frere,
Hu strong ordre is here.

In place of the usual *drincheil* the response is

Ihe, la ful umis,
Swide strong ordre is dhis.[1]

The author of the *Ancrene Riwle* quotes two lines which have been taken to be a contemporary proverb,

euer is pe eie to pe wude leie,
perinne is pet ich luuie,

but which sound much more like a quotation from some contemporary love-lyric. It may be noted that a different version appears in another manuscript of the same work:

ach eauer is pe echze to pe wodele3e
& pe halte bucke climbeo peruppe.
Twa & preo hu feole beoo peo.
preo halpenes makeo a peni.[2]

It looks as if the scribe of this manuscript knew the song and was quoting from a different stanza.

We should hardly have expected to find a love-lyric quoted in a work of religious edification, and it is even more surprising to find that the text of a 12th-century sermon consisted of two lines from a similar song:

Atte wrastlinge mi lemman i ches,
and atte ston-kasting i him for-les.
. . . Mi leue frend, wilde wimmen & golme i mi contreie, wan

[1] *Gemma Ecclesiastica*, pp. 119 ff.; *Speculum Ecclesiae*, p. 209.
[2] *J.* Morton, *The Ancren Riwle* (Camden Society 1852), p. 96.

he gon o pe ring, among manie opere songis, pat litil ben wort pat tei singin, so sein pei pus: Atte wrastlinge mi lemman &c.'[1]

The many other songs known to the preacher have been lost, and only these two lines survive.

These examples make it clear enough that there must have existed a flourishing lyrical literature in English during the 12th century, though almost nothing now remains of it. It is equally certain that the extant lyrical poetry represents a mere fraction of that which was actually composed. Much of our knowledge of it depends on the chance preservation of a few manuscripts containing collections of these lyrics. Such collections, however, were probably rare enough even in Middle English times. Much that was composed was probably never written down, and much that is still extant has been preserved only by the merest accident. Odd snatches of song have been jotted down on the margins of manuscripts, just as they happen to have caught the fancy of some hearer, and a glance through the standard editions of Professor Carleton Brown will show in what unexpected places snatches of medieval lyric have been found.

In consequence it is not surprising that during the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries we meet with numerous references to lyrics probably no longer extant. Sometimes these references are quite general, and there is no way of telling whether the lyrics referred to have survived or not, nor even what the language was in which they were written. So, for example, in a law-suit recorded in the Hundred Rolls:

a lady claims a missal worth twenty shillings, a manual worth 6s. 8d. and two rolls of songs worth sixpence and twopence respectively which were snatched from her on the king's highway between Boughton and her home at Wereham on Easter Day 1282.[2]

---

[1] *Anglia* xlii, 152.

[2] H. M. Cam, *The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls (London* 1930), p. 182.

and again 'to the ears of John Bromyard, the love-ditties of the dancers sound no better than pig-squealing'.[1] In 1303-4 Edward I on his progress through Scotland was met by seven maidens who sang various songs before him, and his accounts record the gift of *y.* to them.[2] William of Wykeham in 1387 fulminates against

> these secular women (who) often keep up their chattering, carolling *(cantalenas)* and other light behaviour, until the middle of the night, and disturb the aforesaid nuns, so that they cannot properly perform the regular services.[3]

In the register of the same bishop, under the year 1384, it is forbidden 'to sing lascivious songs, to perform plays, or to frequent dances or other foolish games'.[4] In 1438 James Bagule, rector of All Saints' Church, York, leaves to William Hanke 'unum librum de Canticis cumglaspys argenti et unum librum rubium de Balads', but no indication is given of what exactly these *Balads* may have been.[5]

However, general references such as these are of comparatively little interest. Fortunately others are not infrequent in which a line, a stanza, or even the whole poem, is quoted. The examples already given include fragments of song which have been found in Latin chronicles, in works of edification, whether Latin or English, and even in sermons. Indeed, one of the most famous of all medieval sermons, once ascribed to Stephen Langton, was preached on the text 'Bel Aliz matin leva', the opening line of a French love-lyric. It seems to have been a favourite practice of medieval preachers to quote from the vernacular in their Latin sermons, and fragments of many

[1] G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge 1933), p. 383.

[2] J. Bain, *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland* (Edinburgh 1888) iv, 475.

[3] E. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries* (Cambridge 1922) p. 157.

[4] Warton ii, 221 n. 2.

[5] *S3.* **xxx,** 80.

lost lyrics, usually religious, are found embedded in them.[1] Similarly any blank piece of vellum seems to have been regarded as a suitable place for the recording of a verse or stanza which has stuck in the hearer's mind. So, for example, a 13th-century manuscript in the Worcester Cathedral Library has eight leaves of various matter at the beginning, on the last of which appear the following English verses:

He may cume to mi lef bute by pe watere.
wanne me lust slepen Jeanne moti wakie
Wnder is pat hi liuie.

On a blank page of another manuscript in the same library are the following lines, subscribed 'dixit Robertus seynte Mary Clericus':

Ne saltou neuer, leuedi
Tuynklen wyt pin eyen.
Hie abbe ydon al myn youth,
Ofte, ofte, ant ofte,
Longe yloued ant yerne ybeden:
Ful dere it his a-bout.
Dore, go pou stille,
Go pou stille, -e,
Yat; hic abbe in pe boure
Ydon al myn uylle, -e.[2]

On f. a8a of MS. F. 126 are fragmentary lines beginning 'Gay, gay, pou art yhent'.[3]

Again, at the end of a 15th-century manuscript in the Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library, appear the following verses:

I haue grete marvell off a bryd
That wt my luff ys went a way

[1] G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England* (Cambridge 1926), pp. 231 n. 1, 272, &c.; *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge 1933), *passim.*

[2] *JLeeds Studies in English* iv, 44 ff.

[3] Carleton Brown & R. H. Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* (New York 1943),. No. 900.

Sho byldis hyr a noer sted
Ther ffbre I morne both nyght & day
I cothe neuer serffe *pt* bryd to pay
Ne frenchypp wt hyr con I none ffynd
bott ffast ffro me sho fflys a way
a las pt euer sho was unkynd
a las qui is sho wt me wroth
& to pt bryd I trespast noght
ze gyff sho be neuer so lothe
Sho shall come owte off my thoght
Now off me sho gyffis ryght noght
bot byldis hus fer under a lynd
In bytter bains sho has nu boght
a las pt euer sho was unkynd
a las qui is pis brydis . . .
I wen. . . . . luff. . .[1]

Ff. 114V-116v of an Escorial manuscript containing a collection of 15th-century music with French, Italian and Flemish songs, include the music and two lines of an English song:

Princesse of youth and flowre of godlihede
The perfight meror of all gentilnesse.[2]

On f. 14b of MS. 258 in the library of Pembroke College, Cambridge, are the following verses in a 13th-century hand:

Cantus occidentalis.
Murie a tyme I telle in May
Wan bricte blosmen brekep on tre,
peise foules singe nyt ant day;
In ilche grene is gamen an gle.[3]

On the fly-leaf of Bodl. Rawlinson D 913 are scribbled various fragments of verse, which perhaps formed part of the repertoire of some 14th-century minstrel. On the recto are:

[1] R. M. Woolley, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library* (London 1927), p. 95.
[2] *Music and Letters* xix, 119 ff.
[3] *Anglia* xlii, 147 n.

i Of euerykune tre,
of euerykune tre,
pe hawe-porn blowet suotes
Of euerykune tre
my lemmon sse ssal boe
my lemmon sse ssal boe
pe fairest of er(pk)inne
my lemmon sse ssal boe.

ii pe godemon on is weie . . .

iii Ichaue a mantel i-maket of cloth . . .

iv Ne sey neuer such a man
a Jordan wa . . . w(ater) h . . .
to gogeshale panyles.

On the verso are *The Irish Dancer, The Maiden on the Moor,* lines from two French songs, and in addition:

i Wer per ouper in pis toun
ale or wy(n)
isch hit wolde bugge
to lemmon myn.
Welle wo was so hardy
forte make my lef al blody
paut he were pe kynges sone
of normaundy
zet icholde a-wreke boe
for lemman myn

Welle wo was me tho
wo was me tho
pe man that leset pat he louit
hym is also
N. . . . . ne lerde
ne ne more (in) can
but crist ich hire biteche
pat was my lemman.

ii Al nist by pe rose rose
al nist bi the rose i lay
darst ich noust pe rose stele
ant zet i bar pe flour away.

iii Al gold lonet is pin her
(al gold) lonet is pin her
. . . pin lankyn . . . lankyn leman (dere).

iv. . . . . dronken
dronken dronken y-dronken
lonken is tabart atte wyne
hay . . . suster waiter peter
pe dronke al depe
a(nt) ichulle eke.
stondet alle stille stille stille stille
stondet alle stille
Stille as any ston
trippe a lutel wit *pi* fot
ant let pi body go.[1]

The first two lines of a poem in Bodl. 692 are now the only ones completely legible:

Joly cheperte of aschall downe
can more on loue than al this towne
lorde wy wy
. . . (ce) lorde wher he goyth
.... (r)e pu scher . . . for al thy fray
.... (w)e a way go thy was good boy go
for ry3t here of geteste pu not3
. . . . . wolt pu
. . . . . cure (cowe)
. . . . . by way goode rownde robyn
...wey go.

In BM. Additional 5666, along with the music, is the burden and part of the first stanza of a love-song of the late I4th or early 15th century:

I have loued so many a day
Ligthly spedde, bot better I may.

This ender day wen me was wo,
Naghtgale to meue me to
Vnder a bugh ther I lay.[2]

[1] *Anglia* xxx, 173 ff.
[2] J. Ritson, *Ancient Songs and Ballads* (London 1829) i, Ixviii, liv.

The 15th-century Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, MS. 383/603 contains a number of lyrics in carole form. Prefixed to one of them are the words:

Bryd on brere y telle yt to
non oper y ne dare.

These words are apparently not the refrain, since after the first stanza of the poem they are begun again, crossed out, and a different refrain is written. They may be an alternative chorus to the same song; but more probably, since the music is given below, they indicate the tune to which the lyric is to be sung. In MS. 465/572 in the same library are the lines:

Wyt a … so wondyrleche grete
pe comb yt ys of red coral
pe bee yt ys of yete.[1]

On the fly-leaf of C.C.C.C. MS. 150, in a 13th-century hand, are the words:

pan creu cacces An pan
was it dey.rybaudye.[2]

Rybaudye is a term commonly used to describe secular lyrics, but nothing more is known of this one. Lines of other lyrics are to be found in some of the manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. On f. 27b of MS. 323 are various scribbles, including the following in a 13th-century hand:

Ic chule bere to wasschen doun
I pe toun
pat was blac ant pat was broun.

---

[1] M. R. James, *Gonville and Caius College, Catalogue of Manuscripts* (Cambridge 1907) ii, 436, 540.

[2] M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge* (Cambridge 1912), P- 339-

On f. la of MS. 1434, in a 15th-century hand,

God grant me gras to gehte a gayn
ye luffe yt I haue loste.

In MS. 1157, in a hand of the same date,

My loue she mornt ffor me for me
my loue she monies for me.[1]

Naturally, lyrical fragments occurring in this way are not always secular; religious lyrics are even more frequent. Three such fragments appear in Gonville and Caius MS. 383/603, and the following is to be found on f. 26ob of MS. 512/543 in the same library:

Lytel wotyt onyman hu derne loue was fu(n)de
But he yat was on Rode don and bouth vs wyth his wonde.
For loue of man he made hymself vnsunde
He haueth ykast a grysli gast to grunde
He bouth vs wyth hys suete blod.
hu myth he don vs more . . .[2]

At the end of a sermon on f. 12ob of MS. 15 in the library of St John's College, Cambridge:

Anglice de passione Christi.
Hwyt was his nakede brist
and his blodi side.
Wan was his fay re neb.
hys wu(n)den depe and wyde.
on fif stedes of hys bodi
l'e stremes renne of blode. . . .[3]

On f. 419 of Trinity College 1109, in a 14th-century hand:

Simenel homes
ber none pornes
alleluya.[4]

---

[1] M. R. James, *Trinity College, Cambridge: Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts* (Cambridge 1900-02) i, 441; iii, 461.
[2] M. R. James, *Gonville and Caius College* ii, 436, 583.
[3] M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of St. John's College, Cambridge* (Cambridge 1913), p. 20.
[4] M. R. James, *Trinity College, Cambridge* iii, 91.

On f. 122 of the early 15th-century Royal 20 A i, among other scribbles, appear the lines,

Amonge al merthes manny
We chol senge of o lady
In al this wordil nis svch a siht.[1]

Two 15th-century poems have been found on a strip of vellum amongst the Ormond manuscripts in Kilkenny Castle. One is a love poem:

Gracius & gay
on hyr lyytt all my tho3th
Butt sche rew on me today
to deth sche hatt me broth.
Hyr feyngerys bytt long and small
Hyr harmus byth rown & toth
Hyr mowth as sweth as lycory
Vn hyr lyytt all my toth
Hyr lyne bytt feyr and gray
Hyr bruys bytt well y benth
Ass rode as rede as rosse yn may
Hyr medyll ys small and gent
Sche ys swett vnder schett
I low hyr (and) no mo
Sche hatt myne harth to kepe
In londes wher sche go
Sodenly tell y pray
To (pe) my low ys lend-
Kysse me yn my way
onys ar y wen(d).

The other is a religious poem in a mixture of Latin and English:

Pryd p(ryd) wo thow be. mater uisyorum
Lucifer alas for the. gaudia polorum
Lucifer was angyll bry3th. in arce polorum . . .

and so on for another nine lines. Also from Ireland is a late

[1] G. F. Warner & J. P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections* (London 1921) ii, 350.

13th-century or early 14th-century poem on f. 1 of the *Liber Primus Kilkenniensis.* 'The page in question had originally contained what appeared to be a list of burgesses, but this had become illegible from long exposure, and after the names had faded out' some verses, of little interest, which appear to be an extract from a poem on the Old and New Dispensation, were written across it.[1]

As an indication of the strange places in which lyrics are sometimes found, mention may be made of one which has been written on the back of a papal bull. This bull was apparently issued in 1199 to the priory of St James by Exeter confirming the monks in the privileges of the Cluniac order. A contemporary copy was made, perhaps at Paris, and sent to the priory. On the back of it are the words and music of an English love song, in what is probably a 14th-century hand:

Bryd one brere, brid, brid one brere,
kynd is come of loue loue to craue.
blioful biryd, on me pu Rewe,
or greyo, lef, greio pu me my graue.

Hic am so blijpe, so bryzit brid on brere,
quan I se pat hende in halle.
yhe is quit of lime, loueli, trewe,
yhe is fayr and flui of alle.

Mikte hic hire at wille hauen,
stedefast of loue, loueli, trewe,
of mi sorwe yhe may me sauen;
loye and blisse were Eere me Newe.[2]

Even more surprising is it to find a snatch of Middle English lyric scribbled on one of the pillars of the now half-ruined church at Duxford, Cambs.:

With wiel my herte is wa
& closyd ys wt care

[1] *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy,* section C, xli, 205 ff.
[2] *Antiquaries Journal* xv, 1 ff.

L & S sekurly
(Ca)use me to syth fill sar
I&. . .
. . . . . for to smarte
V & . . . . Y withall
. . . . joy come to thin herte.

Another, rather more suitable to its surroundings, has been scratched on the wall of Barrington church in Cambridgeshire:

lo fol how the day goth
Cast foly now to the cok
Ryth sone tydyth the wroth
It ys almast xii of the clok.[1]

Snatches of religious poetry in the vernacular are not infrequently found in Latin moral stories, and in one of them we even find two lines from a secular lyric:

A certain man was greedy and ate in the early morning when others went to church, and this he did habitually. One day he ate in this way, and afterwards went off to the woods, singing this song:

Jolyfte, jolyfte,
Maket me to the wode the.

He advanced for a short distance and then fell over backwards. He arose and again fell in the same way. Seeing this from a distance a certain knight came to him and found him to be dead, with his tongue hanging out of his mouth like that of a dog, his whole face as if it were on fire, and the eyes glaring like those of a madman.[2]

A French love letter, scribbled on the fly-leaf of a Latin manuscript, contains six lines of English verse:

Haue gooday nou Mergerete,
Wip grete loue y pe grete.
Y wolde we mi3ten us ofte mete,
In halle, in chaumbre, and in the strete,
Withoute blame of the contre;
God 3eue that so mi3te hit be.[3]

---

[1] *Cambridge Antiquarian Society: Communications* xix, 57.
[2] T. Wright, *Latin Stories* (Percy Society viii), p. 81.
[3] *MLR.* xxxvii, 420.

The report of a law-suit is perhaps the last place in which we should look for examples of medieval lyrical poetry. Yet in a case brought by Lord Neville of Raby against the prior and convent of Durham the stanza of an English poem was apparently quoted in the evidence. To be sure, this was no ordinary law-suit. As a rent for lands at Raby Lord Neville was supposed to bring a stag to the monastery at Durham on the feast of the Translation of St Cuthbert—September 4th. This was to be offered at the shrine of the saint, and afterwards removed to the kitchen of the prior. But a dispute arose concerning the manner in which the offering was to be made. The prior said that Lord Neville should come with a few servants, hand over the stag, and go away again. Lord Neville claimed that the stag should be brought into the cathedral to the sound of the horns of his followers. Afterwards he and his servants should take possession of the prior's house, turn out the servants of the prior, and feast there for the following day and night. In 1290, when the offering was duly made, there was a pitched battle between Lord Neville's men and the monks in which the latter, armed with the great candlesticks used in the services, succeeded in driving Lord Neville's men out of the cathedral and in retaining possession of the stag. Afterwards, during the lifetime of this Lord Neville, the offering was given up. In 1331, however, his son proposed to revive it; the prior objected, and thereupon Lord Neville brought a writ of novel disseisin against him. This curious case, in which a tenant insisted on paying rent to a reluctant landlord, was lost by Neville; unjustly lost, it may be said, since the prior was unable to deny that such a custom had existed, although he quibbled over some of the details. During the course of the law-suit the prior produced an interesting piece of evidence to show that the offering had once been made on Holy Rood Day—September 14. This evidence was the fragment of a lament which, so he said, had been sung on* the death of Lord Neville's great-grandfather, Robert de

Neville, who died c. 1280:

> Wel, qwa sal thir homes blau,
> Hilly Rod thi day?
> Nou is he dede and lies law
> Was wont to blaw thaim ay.[1]

And so, in the midst of the account of a law-suit we come across this single stanza of a lost Middle English ballad.

The common objection to the devil's monopoly of all the best tunes is to be found during the medieval period. The habit of Thomas of Bayeux of providing pious words for the profane songs of the minstrels has already been mentioned, and it will be remembered that the tune of the well-known *Sumer is icumen in* has been provided in the manuscript with a set of pious Latin verses. But the best example of this tendency comes from the *Red Book of Ossory* in which is preserved a collection of Latin hymns in a 14h-century hand. Prefixed to these, and in the same hand, are tags of English and Anglo-Norman secular songs. A note in the manuscript informs us that the Latin hymns were composed by the bishop of Ossory, perhaps Richard de Lesdrede (1318-60), in order to displace certain 'popular and secular songs'. No doubt the lines are quoted from these vernacular songs in order to indicate the tunes to which the Latin hymns are to be sung, and to this pious motive we owe all that has remained of some half-dozen English lyrics:

i Alas hou shold y syng,
Yloren is my playnge
Hou sholdy wi3 3at olde man
To leuen and let my leman,
Swettist of al 3inge.

ii Haue mercie on me frere:
Barfote 3at ygo.

iii Do. Do. nightyngale syng full myrie;
Shal y neure for 3yn loue lengre karie.

[1] *SS.* ix, 112; and see also *Archaeologia Aeliana,* 4th Series, i, 133.

iv Haue God day my leman.

v Gaueth me no garlond of grene
Bot hit ben of Wythones yuroght.

vi Hey how 3e cheualdoures woke al nyght.

The third of these is repeated in a slightly different form, and there are also two fragments in Anglo-Norman.[1]

Not infrequently, only a single line survives of some Middle English lyric. It will be remembered that in the *Nuns' Priest's Tale* Chauntecleer and Pertelote sang 'in swete accord "My lief is faren in Ipnde" '. In this instance the stanza of a song, of which this is the first line, was discovered in a manuscript in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge; and it is no doubt the song of which Chaucer was thinking. No such identification has been possible with the Pardoner's song, 'Com hider, love, to me' *(Prologue* 672), or with the songs beginning, 'Now, loue, *pou* do me ri3te' and 'Doubil me this bourdon' in the spurious 'adventure of the pardonere and tapstere'.[2] In the *Miller's Tale* Nicholas sings 'the kynges noote' (3217), tentatively identified with the 'king villjamis note' of the *Complaynt of Scotlande;* and no doubt 'many a song and many a leccherous lay has perished of Chaucer himself, along with the 'book of the Leoun'.[3] Again, in one of the stanzas of a 15th-century poem on the Timor Mortis theme the opening words are given of two lyrics, one in English and one in French:

Whe schold neuer lust, hop, ne dawnce,
Noper syng no song of pis new ordenance,
As, 'Herte myne, well may pou be, glad and lusty to be',

[1] St John D. Seymour, *Anglo-Irish Literature 1200-1582* (Cambridge 1929) p. 97; *MLN.* liii, 241.

* F. J. Furnivall & W. G. Stone, *The Tale ofBeryn* (EETS. ES. 105), pp. 3, 14-

[3] F. N. Robinson, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (London), pp. 314, 881.

Or ellys, 'Ma bel amour, ma ioy en esperance',
But sey, ' Timor mortis conturbat me'.[1]

Apart from these snatches, presumably either the first line or else the refrain, nothing is known of the two lyrics.

References to contemporary songs appear also in Skelton's works. In *The Bowge of Cowrie* it is said of Harvey Hafter that 'euer he sange, "Sythe I am no thynge playne" ' (v. 235), no doubt the first line of some popular song. Elsewhere the same character is made to say that he can sing by rote the two songs beginning Trynces of yougthe', and 'Shall I sayle wyth you. In the same poem Ryote is represented as a musical genius, 'And ay he sange, "In fayth, decon thou crewe" ' (v. 36o).[2] If the list given in the *Garlande ofLaurell* is to be trusted, many of Skelton's own works have disappeared. Some of these we should be glad to have, among them the Tratyse of Triumphis of the Rede Rose', 'The Balade of the Mustarde Tarte', The Murnyng of the mapely rote', and the 'Epitomis of the myller and his ioly make'.

In the prologues to some of the books of his translation of the *Aeneid* Gavin Douglas mentions various popular songs. In the prologue to the XII Book are references to three:

i The schip salis our the salt fame,
Will bring thir merchandis and my lemman hame (w. 197-8).

ii I wil be blyth and lycht
Myne hart is lent apon sa gudly wycht (w. 199-200).

iii I come hidder to wow (v. 298).

Another is mentioned in the prologue to Book XIII:

The joly day now dawis (v. 182),

---

[1] *MLR.* xxviii, 235.

[2] Mentioned also in *A denote trentale for old lohn Clarke,* v. 44, and in *Why come ye nat to Courte,* v. 63. With Trynces of yougthe' cf. p. 157.

a song which is also referred to by Dunbar in his *Address to the Merchantis of Edinburgh,*

> 3our commone menstrallis hes no tone
> Bot 'Now the day dawis', and 'Into Joun (w. 29-30).

One of the hens in Henryson's *The Cock and the Fox* promises to sing

> this sang 'wes never wedow sa gay (v. 515).

In *The Fox, the Wolf and the Cadger,* the last sings 'Huntis up, up, upon hie' (v. 2083), whilst the Town mouse and the Country mouse, seated at their feast, are singing 'Haill yule, haill' (v. 289) when they are interrupted. A Latin poem on the battle of Neville's Cross contains some English words, which may perhaps be taken from a contemporary lyric:

> Clamabant 'In a day go we to the tyrie wyth hay',
> Ipsis sit Waleway, meschef tristissima woday.[1]

On the last leaf of a Psalter is written 'I am not unkynd to love as I ffynd', which reads like a line from a lost love-lyric,[2] and so also do some words, in a 15th-century hand, written on the top margin of a folio of Bodl. 34, 'ly pow me ner lemmon in py narms'. The extant accounts of the precentor of Tattershall Church and College for 1498-9 mention a song called 'Maydens of London'.[3]

Finally, reference should be made to the list of thirty-eight songs and thirty dances in the *Complaynt of Scotlande*[4] A good many of them can be identified, and some are certainly of the 16th century, e.g. the first of the songs Tastance vitht

[1] T. Wright, *Political Poems and Songs* (RS. 14, i, 48).
[2] C. Wordsworth & H. Littlehales, *The Old Service-Books of the English Church* (London 1910), p. 60.
[3] *HMC.: Manuscripts of Lord De Ulsle and Dudley* i, 194.
[4] J. A. H. Murray, *The Complaynt of Scotlande* (EETS. ES. 17, 18) pp. lxxxii ff., 64.

glide companye' is by Henry VIII. But it is not unlikely that many of those of which we know nothing may go back to Middle English times.[1]

[1] 'Of late yeeres an English gentleman travelling in Palestine, not fair from Jerusalem, as hee passed thorow a Country Towne, he hard by chance a woman sitting at her doore dandling her childe, to sing; *Bothwel bank thow bluntest fayre'* (R. Verstegan, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (London 1634), p. 296). For a further fragment, see *Speculum* xxvr, 142.

X

POLITICAL AND SATIRICAL POETRY

A CONSIDERABLE amount of poetry dealing with political and social conditions has survived from the Middle English period. Examples are extant in all three of the languages then in use, but we are not here concerned with the Latin or Anglo-French contributions. The extant works in Middle English date mostly from the 14th and 15th centuries, and vary in length from the pregnant couplet on the fourteenth year of Richard II:

> The ax was sharpe, the stokke was harde,
> In the xiiii yere of Kyng Richarde,

to important works such as *Piers Plowman*, *Richard the Redeless*, &c. The earliest extant poem is one on the battle of Lewes, written by a partisan of Montfort, celebrating the defeat of Henry III and more especially the discomfiture of Richard of Cornwall. But although this is the earliest political poem in English, which has survived, there are many references to similar poetry of an earlier date. In addition, later allusions indicate that the surviving political poetry is only the remnant of a much more extensive literature. This was to be expected since such poetry is essentially ephemeral, and would tend to disappear along with the special conditions which gave rise to it. Only the more important poems had a good chance of being preserved, and any others would owe their survival to accident.

When only bare allusions to political poetry are found,

and no illustrative quotation is given, it is not always possible to speak definitely of the language in which it was written. Most of the political poetry of which we hear during the 12th century was presumably in French, though the fact is nowhere definitely stated. Probable exceptions are the songs connected with St Wulfstan referred to in the *Vita Wulfstani*. On one occasion the saint is said to have repulsed the advances of a wealthy woman who had fallen in love with him, and to have rebuked her severely, whereupon 'the story of this incident spread through the city, and for long it was the theme of songs at all the cross-roads'.[1] But the poems of a certain Luc de la Barre against Henry I were certainly in French. Apparently the poet, not satisfied with a literary warfare, took up arms against the king and was captured at the surrender of the castle of Pontaudemer in 1124. Thereupon Henry ordered the poet 'to be deprived of his sight for having ridiculed him in his songs, and engaged in rash enterprises against him'. Charles of Flanders endeavoured to procure some mitigation of the punishment, but the poet's verses had evidently touched the king on the raw: 'This humorous poet made scurrilous songs about me, and sang them aloud to bring me into contempt, thus often making me the laughing-stock of malicious enemies.' Consequently pardon was refused, and the poet, preferring death to blindness, killed himself by dashing his head against the walls of his prison.[2] Equally certainly in French were the attacks upon each other by Henry of Burgundy and Richard I during the course of the Third Crusade.[3] Richard himself was, of course, well known as a poet and troubadour, and carried on a literary warfare with other troubadours. Some of his love-poems and *sirventes* are still extant, but most of them have long since disappeared.

[1] R. R. Darlington, *Vita Wulfstam* (London 1928), p. 12.
[2] Ordericus iv, 460 ff.
[3] T. Gale, *Histories Anglicanse Scriptores* (Oxford 1687) ii, 409.

At other times we cannot be certain whether the songs referred to were in English or French. When Normandy was invaded by Philip of France, the castle of Vaudreuil, under the command of Robert FitzWalter and Sigar de Quincy, was surrendered after a suspiciously weak defence. As a result satirical poems are said to have been composed in both kingdoms, attributing the disaster to treachery, but it is impossible to say whether these songs were in French or English or both.[1] One of the charges brought against William of Longchamp, bishop of Ely, the unpopular chancellor of Richard I, was that,

> in order to increase his fame and to glorify his name, he was in the habit of tricking out verses and adulatory jingles that he had picked up by begging, and of enticing jesters and singers from the kingdom of France by his presents, that they might sing about him in the streets; and but lately it was everywhere said that there was not such a person in all the world.[2]

Elsewhere it is said that Longchamp could not speak English —in fact it was his ignorance of the language which led to his capture when he was later fleeing the country disguised as a woman—, and since the minstrels are specifically said to have been imported from France, it would seem reasonable to suppose that their songs must have been in French. But, if so, it is difficult to believe that their propaganda could have been particularly effective in this country.

When references to such popular songs occur at a later date it is almost certain that they were in English, even if this language is not specifically mentioned, as it occasionally is. Concerning John, Otto and Philip

> a metrician made theyse baladis of them, as foloweth.
>
> O quern mirabilia, good Lord thy werkys been
> In punysshement of synners, by thy myght, wondersly;
> As, by olde storyes, it is playnly seen

[1] Ralph de Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum* (RS. 66, 144).
[2] Roger de Hoveden, *Chronica* (RS. 51, iii, 143).

One synner the other hath correcte vtterly.
As Aalizaunder, with lulius, Pompey, and Tholomy,
And many other, which as thy scourgys were,
To punysshe synners, and themselfe also dere. . . .

and so on for another two stanzas. Fabyan is not, of course, a particularly good authority for the reign of John, nor does this read at all like a contemporary popular song. It is much more likely to have been a later purely literary effort. The same author tells also of a *certain panflete,* which he claims to have seen, and which explained the reason for the enmity between Edward I and the city of London:

in an olde panflete it apperyth that ye sayd Gregory Rokkisby, toke certayne brybes of the bakers, and sufferyd them to sell brede lackynge .vi. oz. or .vii. vnces in a peny lofe.[1]

Again Fabyan's authority is small, but the *panflete,* if it ever existed and was at all contemporary, would be of considerable interest. In 1323 Edward II travelled through the North of England. On his way he spent some days at Whorlton Castle, where he is recorded to have paid 3s. to Alianore le Rede and Alice de Whorlton for 'chanting of songs of Simon de Montfort before the king, and other songs'.[2] The only extant English poem which would fit such a description is *The Song of Lewes,* but the sentiments there expressed make it most unlikely that it could have been sung before Edward II.

No doubt many of the more important statutes passed during the Middle English period were celebrated in song by the people affected by them. One such Anglo-French song on the Statute of Trailbaston happens to have survived. It professes to have been written in the woods and to have been dropped on the highroad so that it might fall into the hands of the travellers.[3] A stanza in French and English from a similar song, against the writ *De Quo*

[1] Fabyan, p. 322.
[2] *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* **xxxvi, 30.**
[3] T. Wright, *Political Songs* (Camden Society 1839), p. 231.

Warranto, of the same King Edward I, has been preserved by Walter of Hemingburgh:

> On a certain occasion when the king was holding a parliament, and the sons of the magnates were standing about him in the evening, he said to them, 'Of what do you speak between yourselves when I am in council with your fathers?' One of them replied, 'You will not be offended if I speak truly?' The king. 'Certainly not/ 'My lord king we speak in this way,—
>
> Le Roy cuvayte nos deneres
> E la Rayne nos beau maners
> E le Quo voranto
> Sale mak wus al to do.'[1]

Whether there were more stanzas to this song we can hardly say—it seems complete enough as it stands,—but it happens to have been preserved only because the Latin chronicler, who earlier has given the famous, if apocryphal, reply of the earl of Warenne to the justices, wished to emphasize the dislike of the magnates for this measure. No doubt other famous legal measures roused their opponents to express their dislike of them in verse, but the verses have not survived.

Nearly all the extant political poetry is anonymous. The earliest writer of such verse in English whose name is known, and some of whose works still remain, is Laurence Minot, a northerner who celebrated in verse the main events of the reign of Edward III. It may be, however, that Minot had a predecessor in the preceding reign. For we hear of a certain Robert Baston, a Carmelite monk and prior of the monastery at Scarborough, who was taken to Scotland, in the train of Edward II, on the expedition to relieve Stirling which ended with Bannockburh. His task apparently was to celebrate the deeds of the army, and Scottish chroniclers make merry over the capture of the poet by Bruce and the fact that he was compelled to celebrate the English defeat as the price of his freedom. Several of his Latin poems are extant, and he is also said by Bale to have written Toemata

[1] Walter of Hemingburgh, *Chronicon* (EHS. 1848) ii, 6-7.

et Rhythmi, Tragoediae et Comoediae vulgares', some of which were presumably in English.[1] However, the later bibliographers are not particularly good authority for i4th-century vernacular writings, and are apt to attribute extant anonymous works in English to some known Latin writer.

Mention has already been made of the poems celebrating the triumphs of Edward III; but there were other events earlier in his reign concerning which songs are said to have been composed, though not by his unofficial laureate. While he was yet king only in name, there was a good deal of desultory fighting against the Scots. This did not end until 1328, when a peace was signed by which the independence of Scotland was recognized, and Joanna, sister to the young king, was married to David Bruce. The peace was unpopular in England, and the songs referred to were made by the Scots who saw in the peace another victory over the English. According to Fabyan:

> it was not longe after or the Scottis in despyte of ye Englysh men, callyd hir lane make peace, and also to theyr more derysyon made iyuerse truffys, roundys, & songys, of the which one is specially remembryd as folowyth.
>
> Longe beerdys hartles,
> Paynted hoodys wytles,
> Gay cotis graceles
> Makyth Englande thryfteles.[3]

A somewhat different account is given in the *Brut*, an earlier authority than Fabyan. The marriage of David Bruce and Joanna is duly noticed under the year 1328; but the rhyme is given under the previous year and is connected, not with the marriage, but with one of the periodical raids into Yorkshire during which 'pe Scotes made a bille pat was fastenede oppon pe cherche dores of Seint Peres toward Stangate',[3] with these verses on it.

[1] Warton ii, 213. [2] Fabyan, p. 439.
[3] F. W. D. Brie, T*he Brut* (EETS. 131, 136), pp. 249, 257.

Such a use of the church doors for the dissemination of political poems is not uncommon in medieval times. Towards the end of the I5th century, a Coventry church is used in this way. A certain Laurence Saunders appears to have been at that time an active member of the Dyers guild, and a thorn in the side of the Corporation. In 1494 he was imprisoned for causing a riot in the town, but was apparently not without supporters for

within viij dayes after Lammasse ther was a bill sett vppon pe north Chirch durre in seynt Mighels Chirch be some evell disposed person vnknowen the tenour wherof hereaftur ensueth:—

Be it knowen & vnderstand
This Cite shuld be free & nowe is bonde.

Dame goode Eve made it free;
& nowe pe custome for woll & pe draperie.

Also hit is made pat no prentes shalbe
but xiij penyes pay shuld he.

pat act did Robert Grene,
perfore he had many a Curse, I wene.

And nowe a noper rule ye do make
pat non shall ryde at Lammas but they pat 36 take.

When our ale is Tunned
3e shall haue drynk to your Cake.

Ye haue put on man like a Scot to raunsome,
pat wolbe remembred when ze haue all forgoten.
Caviat'.

Saunders was again imprisoned in 1496:

Wheruppon ij seducious billes were founde i-sette vppon pe Mynster durre in pe feste of seynt Anne, & a noper was cast &c. Wherof the tenour here-after ensuen.

Then follow eight three-line stanzas and twelve couplets in

support of Laurence Saunders as the champion of the common people.[1]

During the I5th century the publishing of libels in this way had apparently become so common that it was necessary for the king to issue a proclamation forbidding the posting of bills and lampoons in public places.[2] In 1448, according to John Piggot,

> billes were set upon the gates of powles writen to this effecte . . . .
> But Suthfolke, Salesbery and Say
> Be don to deathe by May
> England may synge well away.[3]

Similarly *Davies' Chronicle* tells of the posting up, in i46o, of a 'balat' containing 86 lines in Latin and English on the city walls of Canterbury, welcoming the impending invasion of the earls of Warwick and Salisbury.[4] The well-known couplet,

> The Cat, the Rat, and Lovel our dog
> Rule all England under a hog,

was posted on the doors of St Paul's by William Collyngbourne.[5]

A similar happening took place at Cambridge in 1418. In that year the Mayor, Bailiffs and Commonalty of the town complained to the King's Council that many of the scholars had caused great terror to the mayor by lying in wait to kill him and his officers. When they found this to be impossible,

> they affixed on the mayor's gate a certain schedule, to his great scandal, and so that the mayor and burgesses dared not to preserve the peace. This schedule was in these terms:—

---

[1] M. D. Harris, *The Coventry Leet Book* (EETS. 134, 135), pp. 566, 577-8.

[2] T. Rymer, *Foedera* (London 1727) xi, 268.

[3] C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford 1913), p. 370.

[4] J. S. Davies, *English Chronicle from 1377 to 1461* (Camden Society 1856), pp. 91 ff.

[5] Fabyan, p. 672.

Billa posita super hostium Majoris. Citatio Peremptoria.
Looke out here Maire with thie pilled pate,'
And see wich a scrowe is set on thie gate;
Warning thee of hard happes,
For and it lukke thou shalt have swappes:
Therefor I rede keepe the at home;
For thou shalt abey for that is done;
Or els kest on a coate of mayle;
Truste well thereto withouten faiie.
And great Golias, Joh. Essex,
Shalt have a clowte with my karille axe,
Wherever I may him have.
And the hosteler Bambour, with his goat's beard,
Once and it hap shal be made afeard,
So God mote me save!
And yit with thie catchepoles hope I to meete,
With a fellowe or twayne, in the playne streete,
And her gownes brake;
And that harlot Hierman, with his calves snowte,
Of buffets ful sekerly shall bern a rowte,
For his werkes sake.
And yet shall Hankyn Attilbrigge
Full yerne for swappes his tayle wrigge,
And it hap arith.
And other knaves, all on heape,
Shall take knockes full good cheape,
Come once winter nith.
But nowe I praye to God Almyth,
That whatsoever yowe spare,
That metche sorowe to him bedith,
And evill mote he fare!
Amen, quoth he, that beshrewed the Mair's very visage.[1]

Again in 1424 William Paston laid information against a certain Walter Azlak, who

to the seyd William Paston swiche and so many manaces of deth and dismembryng maden and puttyn by certeyns Englische billes rymed in partye, and up on the yates of the Priorie of the Trinite chirche of Norwiche, and on the yates of the chyrche of the Freres Menures

[1] G. G. Coulton, *Social Life in Britain* (Cambridge 1918), p. 66.

of Norwiche, and the yates of the same Cite called Nedeham yates and Westewyk yates, and in othre places wyth inne the seyd Cite by the seyd Walter and Richard sette, makyng mension and berying this undyrstondyng that the seyd William, and hese clerkes, and servauntes schuld be slayn and mordered in lyke forme as the seyd John Grys in the seyd forme was slayne and mordered: conteyning also these too words in Latyn, *et cetera*, by which wordes communely it was undyrstandyn that the forgeers and makers of the seyd billes imagyned to the seyd William, hese clerkes and servauntes, more malice and harm than in the seyd billes was expressed.[1]

In 1465, on the occasion of a quarrel between the priests and the friars, the latter were preached against, and in reply 'set uppe byllys at every chyrche dore that the docter sayde nott trought, but the trought shulde be schewyd ande sayd by Docter Mayster John Mylverton'.[2]

Towards the end of the 14th century some of the more important political figures of the time became the subject of songs, composed both by their friends and by their opponents. One of the first of these was Peter de la Mare, Speaker to the Parliament of 1376. He seems to have touched the imagination of his contemporaries and, so far as we know, was the first commoner to be celebrated in this fashion during his own lifetime. John of Gaunt was probably the most important political figure at this time, and it is not surprising to hear that in 1377 lampoons on him were found posted about the city of London,[3] There is no information about the language of either of these poems, but at this date it was almost certainly English. In the following year (1378) an account of certain happenings at Oxford tells of a song against the young king, Richard II, and this time it is definitely stated to have been in English. A member of the

[1] J. Gairdner, *The Paston Letters* (London 1904) ii, 13.

[2] *Collections of a London Citizen* (Camden Society 1876), pp. 228 ff.

[3] *Chromcon Angliæ* (RS. 64, 392, 129).

king's household came to Oxford. There he was serenaded by some of the students with a song in English 'containing words against the honour of the king', the affair ending with a general discharge of arrows through the window of his room. Complaint was made, and the Chancellor and vice-Chancellor of the University were summoned before the Council. When it appeared that no punishment had been inflicted on the culprits, the Chancellor was made to resign and the vice-Chancellor imprisoned.[1]

John Ball, one of the most important of the leaders of the Peasant's Rebellion, appears to have encouraged his followers by the circulation of letters 'full of riddles or dark sentences', which usually included verses. Some of these are given by Stow; the first, 'found in the budget of one that should be hanged', being the famous epistle of 'John Shepe, sometime Saint-Mary priest of York'. Stow claims to have seen several other epistles of John Ball, but has preserved only the following:

John Ball Saint Mary priest, greeteth well all manner of men, and biddeth them in name of the Trinitie, Father, Sonne, & holy Ghost, stand manlike together in truth, & helpe truth, and truth shall helpe you:

now raygneth pride in price,
couetise is holden wise,
lechery without shame,
gluttonie without blame,
enuie raygneth with reason,
and sloath is taken in great season,
God doe boote for nowe is time. Amen.

Similar epistles are given purporting to come from Jacke Miller and lacke Trueman, and Stow says that he has omitted 'lohn Carters Epistle, a libell sonamed, &c', which was no doubt a similar kind of production.[2]

[1] *Eulogium Historiarum* (RS. 9, iii, 348).

[2] J. Stow, *Annales*, continued by E. Howes (London 1615), p. 294-

During the early part of the reign of Henry IV Henry Percy appears to have touched the imagination of his contemporaries as his nickname Hotspur shows. Several chroniclers give Latin verses commemorating the battle of Shrewsbury, but these are doubtless literary, not popular, productions. However, at the end of the Castle Howard manuscript of the metrical life of St Cuthbert appears a rather obscure stanza which may indicate the former existence of popular songs about Hotspur:

> Henry haitspours haith a halt,
> and he is falleng lame;
> Francis phesite but for that fait
> Sweares he was not to blame.[1]

The outbreak of war with France in the following reign inevitably led to the appearance of a good deal of verse on that subject. A contemporary poem on the battle of Agincourt has been partly preserved in one of the early chronicles of London. The writer of the chronicle took his narrative from the account given in the popular ballad until, tired of paraphrasing, he contented himself with simply copying it down. The lines of the earlier part, with the rhymes, are easily to be traced in the prose.[2] Similarly much of the narrative concerning the siege of Harfleur and the battle of Agincourt in the *Brut* is said to have been based upon 'some current ballads of the time, whether those which have survived or others that have perished'.[3]

During the I5th century references to political poetry still persist. Magdalen College, Oxford, Misc. 306, contains a declaration in English of the grounds of the Kentish insurrection of 1450, and ends with four lines of verse:

[1] *SS.* Ixxxvii, 245.
[2] T. Wright, *Political Poems and Songs* (RS. 14, ii, 123 ff.)-
[3] C. L. Kingsford, *op.cit.*, p. 116; cf. p. 239.

God be oure gyde, and then schull we spede,
Who so evur say nay, ffalse for ther money reulethe.
Trewth for his tales spellethe.
God seende us a ffayre day! Awey, traytours, awey![1]

Similarly, *Gregory's Chronicle* gives a couplet which is said to have been repeated by the citizens of London on the approach of the then earl of March to the city in 1461:

He that had Londyn for sake
Wolde no more to hem take.[2]

At the very end of the century the accounts of Tattershall College, for the years 1495-6, give the titles of two songs, The Cry of Caleys' and 'Flos Florum[1], of which the former at any rate must have been in English.[3] An innovation introduced by John Norman, Lord Mayor of London, apparently led to the composition of a song in celebration of it:

And this yere (1453-4), vpon the morne after Symound and Jude, John Norman befornamed, beyng chosyn Mair for that present yere, was rowed by water to Westmynster wt the Aldermen; and alle the chief of the Comoners of the Cite went also thedir by barges; which of tymes owte of mynd was vsed before season by the Mairs to ride allwey by land to take their charge. Wherfore the watermen of Themmys made a song of this John Norman, wherof the begynnyng was, 'Rowe thy bote Norman'; which newe custume was welle allowed, & hathe contynued from his daies to this season.[4]

A similar account is given by Fabyan, who adds a little more of the song:

Rowe the bote Norman, rowe to thy lemman,
And so forth wt a longe processe.[5]

It is probable enough that satirical and political poetry was

[1] *HMC., 8th Report,* Appendix, p. 267.
[2] *Collections of a London Citizen* (Camden Society 1876), p. 215.
[3] HMC., *Manuscripts of Lord De Ulsle & Dudley* i, 197.
[4] C. L. Kingsford, *Chronicles of London* (Oxford 1905), p. 164.
[5] Fabyan, p. 628; the poem is mentioned also by Skelton in *The Bowge of Courte,* v. 252.

produced by the English settlers in Ireland. Little of it has been preserved, but there are two references to lost poems of this type. In Lansdowne 418 is preserved the first stanza of a long ballad which the scribe claims to have copied out of a 'smale olde book in parchment called the booke of Ross or of Waterford'. The scribe's original is the present Harl. 913, but that part of it which contained this ballad has been lost, and the first stanza copied into Lansdowne 418 is all that remains. The poem appears to have been a warning to the young men of Waterford against the le Poer family, but the copyist apparently had some difficulty in reading the text:

There is in this book a long discourse in meter putting the youth of Waterford in mind of harme taken by the Powers, and wishing them to beware for ye time to come. I have written out the first staffe only,

Young men of Waterford learne now to play
For youre mare is plowis i lai beth awey
Secure ze 3ure hanfelis yt lang habith ilei
And fend 3ou of the powers that walkith bi the wey
I rede
For if hi takith 3ou on and on
from ham scapith ther never one
I swer bi Christ and St Jon
That of goth 3ur hede
Now hi wlkith &C.[1]

In the primatial register of John Swayne, archbishop of Armagh, 1418-39, appear a dozen lines of verse which were evidently part of a bitter attack on the dress of the time.[2]

From Scotland corngs only a single isolated reference, and that is the well-known stanza from the lament on the death of Alexander III which is quoted by Wyntoun:

This sang wes maid of him forthy:
'Sen Alexander our king wes deid,
That Scotland left in luf and le,

[1] See also St John D. Seymour, *op.rit.*, p. 88.
[2] *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, section C, xli, 209.

Away wes sons of aill and breid,
Off wyne and walx, of gamyn and gle.
The gold wes changeit all in leid,
The frute fal3eit on everilk tre.
Ihesu, succour and send remeid,
That stad is in perplexite.'[1]

There are variations in the manuscripts of Wyntoun, and it is possible that the opening lines of Barbour's *Bruce* are a reminiscence of this song. No doubt other political songs were written, but, apart from those to be mentioned later, no hint of them has survived.

As a sub-division of political poetry might be included the soldiers' songs. Such literature must have existed throughout the period, though it is not surprising to find that it has left little trace of its existence. Since it is essentially oral and popular it would only seldom and by accident achieve a written existence. Consequently, such poetry is known today only from occasional fragments quoted by various of the Latin and vernacular chroniclers. When the Norman minstrel Taillefer led the attack at Hastings he is said to have encouraged his companions by chanting some version of the *Song of Roland',* but the earliest extant example of soldiers' songs in English is a fragment said to have been sung by the followers of Geoffrey de Mandeville during their ravages in the Fen District. In one of the manuscripts of the *Historia Anglorum* Matthew Paris preserves the tradition that the earl and his followers sang mockingly of their wild doings:

I ne mai a-live
For Benoit ne for Ive.

It is interesting to note that, on the evidence of this fragment, some of his followers must have been English, or else it must be that English had already become the usual language of the Norman conquerors. A close analogy is the line or two of a

[1] F. J. Amours, *Wyntoun's Original Chronicle* (STS. 1903-14) v, 144.

song said to have been sung by the Flemish mercenaries of the earl of Leicester in 1173, while halted on the heath near St Edmunds, just before their defeat by the king's army:

> Hoppe, hoppe, Wilekin, hoppe, Wilekin,
> Engelond is min ant tin.[1]

But the greater number of such songs still extant deal with the Scottish wars, and many examples of these have been preserved by various chroniclers, more especially by Peter of Langtoft and by his translator Robert Mannyng of Brunne. Langtoft writes, of course, in Anglo-French but there can be no doubt that the songs from which he quotes were in English. He gives occasional stanzas in English; and though he usually starts in French when quoting from longer poems he nearly always ends in English, as if he had tired of the task of translation. Moreover the different manuscripts sometimes have different versions of the English, suggesting that the scribes had felt it better to give the version known to them rather than to copy their original exactly. Similarly, Mannyng's versions often differ a good deal from those of Langtoft, and he occasionally adds stanzas not found in any of the manuscripts of his original. On the whole, there can be little doubt that these are all that have survived of actual songs current at this period. The earliest of them was occasioned by the rising of the Scots and the withdrawal of homage in 1296. It is fpund only in two manuscripts of Langtoft and is not given by Mannyng:

> Tprut Scot riueling
> Wip mikel mistiming
> crop pu ut of kage.

Then comes one said to have been sung by the Scots in contempt of Edward I when he fortified Berwick:

[1] Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum* (RS. 44, i, 271, 381).

Pikit him,
& dikit him,
On scorne said he.
He pikes & dikes
in length, as him likes,
how best it may be,
& pou has for pi pikyng,
mykille ille likyng,
pe sope is to se,
Without any lesyng,
alle is pi hewing,
fallen opon pe,
For scatred er pi Scottis
& hodred in per hottes,
neuer pei ne the.
Right als I rede,
pei tombled in Tuede,
pat woned bi pe se.[1]

Here Mannyng includes half a dozen lines (7-12) not found in any of the manuscripts of Langtoft, and it may be that he knew and quoted from a fuller version of the song. A further reminiscence of it appears in the *Annales Angliae et Scotise,* and there can be no doubt that the author is referring to the song known to Langtoft and Mannyng:

Confestim unus e Scotis alta voce coepit convitiaet verba probrosa Regi Angliae inferre, patria lingua; Kyng Edward, wanne pu hauest Berwic, pike pe, wanne Jm hauest geten dike pe.[2]

A somewhat different version is given in the *Brut* and in Fabyan, who have substantially the same account:

Kyng Edward went him toward Berwik, and bisegede pe toun; and po pat were wipin manliche ham defendede, and sette afire and brent ij of Kyng Edwardes shippis, and saide, in despite and in reprofe of him:

Wenes Kyng Edward, wij? his longe shankes
forto wyn Berwik, al our vnpankes?
gas pikes him!
and when he hap hit,
gas diche him[3]

The next two quotations in Mannyng appear to be taken from some poem on the battle of Dunbar and the events leading up

[1] T. Hearne, *Peter Langtoft's Chronicle* (Oxford 1725) ii, 273.
[2] *Annales Anglias et Scotiae* (RS. 28, ii, 373).
[3] F. W. D. Brie, *op.cit.,* p. 189; cf. Fabyan, p. 398.

to it. Here Langtoft has first translated the English, tired of it, and left the last six lines in the original English:

Whan 36 haf pe pris
of 3our enmys,
non salle 36 saue,
Smyte with suerd in hand,
alle Northumberland
with right salle 3e haue,
& Inglond 3it alle,
for werre salle
be tint for pis drede.
Scotte neuer bigan
vnto Inglis man
to do so douhty dede.
per on pat grene,
pat kynrede kene,
gadred als pe gayte,
Right, als I wene,
on som was it sene,
per pe bit bayte.

There follows an account of the battle, and then,

pe Scottis had no grace,
to spede in per space,
for to mend per nisse,
pei filed per face,
pat died in pat place,
pe Inglis rymed pis.
Oure fote folk pou
put pam in pe polk,
& nakned per nages,
Bi no way
herd I neuer say
of prester pages,
Purses to pike,
robis to rike,
& in dike pam schonne,
wissin
Scotte of Abrethin,
kotte is pi honne.'[1]

The last four lines are completely different in some of the manuscripts of Langtoft:

That in the felde felle.
Thay token ay tulke;
The roghe raggy sculke
Rug ham in helle.[2]

This variation suggests that some of the copyists may have known a different version of the song. The six lines at the beginning of Mannyng have no parallel in any of the manuscripts of Langtoft, and their matter suggests that they were not part of the original song, but simply an introduction to it in the same metre composed by Mannyng himself. The next

[1] T. Hearne, *Peter Langtoft's Chronicle* (Oxford 1725) ii, 276, 277.
[2] *Langtoft* ii, 248.

fragment comes at the end of the description of the surrender of Dunbar:

pe Scottis
I telle for sottis,
& wrecchis vnwar,
Unsele
dyntis to dele
pam drouh to Dunbar.

Similar lines are found in the *Brut* and in Fabyan, although there they are applied to the discovery of the attempted treachery of Sir Richard Siward, with slight changes in phrasing to make them more appropriate. The next poem, celebrating the capture of Baliol and the apparent conquest of Scotland, has mostly been translated by Langtoft; he leaves only six lines in English, and these show significant differences from the version given by Mannyng:

pe Walsh & pe Irish,
tille our men Inglysh,
halp douhtily,
pat we pe Scottis had,
& to prison lad,
& com tille our crie.
Now es alle ent,
& home ere bei went,
God gyue at pe parlement,
pe Scottis be alle schent
& hanged hi pe hals.
Edward now penk,
pei did pe a blenk,
brent Hexham.
pe croice & pe rode,
brent per it stode,
or pei pien nam.
Now has pou myght,
gyf pi dome right,
per dede is wele sene,
Els wille pei eft,
onpo pat er left,
bigynne newe tene.
Men may merci haue,
traytour not to saue,
for luf ne for awe,
Atteynt of traytorie,
suld haf no mercie,
wip no maner lawe.
Jon pe Baliol,
no witte was in pi pol,
whan pou folie pouhtis,
To leue pe right scole,
pou did als a fole,
& after wrong wrouhtis.
For boule bred in his boke,
whan he tynt pat he toke,
alle his kyngdome,
For he has ouerhipped,
his tippet is tipped,
his tabard is tome.

Later on are some general lines on the state of Scotland, and again Mannyng often differs a good deal from Langtoft, who gives only the last dozen lines in the original English:

Cambinhoy þou scabbed Scotte,
beres him coy, pi nek pi hotte,
þat fendes whelp, þe deuelle it breke,
per with craft It salle be hard
he has þam raft, to here Edward,
it may not help. ageynþe speke.
þe trulle þe drenge He salle þe ken,
on se ,þei lenge our lond to bren,
þe fendes tueye, & werre bigynne,
þe hold þam fer, þou getes noping,
& dar no ner, bot pi riuelyng,
þan Orkeneye. to hang per inne.
Andrew is wroth, þe sete of þe Scone
þe wax him loth, is driuen ouer Done,
for per pride. to London led,
He is þam fro, I hard wele telle,
now salle þei go, þat bagelle & belle,
schame to betide. be filchid & fled.

Some lines follow on the execution of Wallace:

At London is his heued, His lif salle he tyne,
his quarters ere leued, & die þe orgh pyne,
in Scotland spred, withouten merci.
To wirschip per iles, þus may men here,
& lere of his wiles, a ladde forto lere,
how wele þat he sped. to biggen in pays;
It is not to drede, It fallis in his ise,
traytour salle spede þat hewes ouer hie,
als he is worþi, wiþ þe Walays.[1]

Finally, the closing passage of one of the manuscripts of Langtoft (C.U.L. Gg. i.i.) contains the following lines, apparently as a satirical song gloating over the defeat of the Scots. They do not appear in any others of the manuscripts of Langtoft, and are omitted by Mannyng:

for pare were pai bal brend
he kanged ham pidre kend

[1] T. Hearne, *Peter Langtoft's Chronicle* (Oxford 1725) ii, 278, 279, 281, 330.

And dreued to dote,
for Scottes at Dunbar
haued at *payre* gan char
schame of par note
Wer neuer dogges pere
hurled out of herre
fro coylthe no cotte.

There can be little doubt that the originals of these poems were in English, though whether they were actually popular songs current amongst the people is a different matter. Some of them read like popular poetry, others have a more literary tinge. The fact that all of them, whether by the Scots against the English or the English against the Scots, are in the same metre may be significant. For it is hardly likely that true popular songs would be so uniform. In all probability, parts of them actually were popular songs, which have been worked over by some later poet. It is from his work that Langtoft is quoting; or perhaps parts of the songs maybe due to Langtoft himself. The additions in Brunne suggest that he also had access to the English originals; and, although we know that he was quite capable of interpolations in the same metre, most of his additions seem to give the authentic flavour of the originals. It may be that comparatively little of the original popular songs remains in Langtoft; possibly they were used by later writers as the basis for longer poems, and translated by Langtoft into a different language and metre.

Several of these songs on the Scottish wars are found elsewhere. Some of those in Langtoft and Mannyng appear in a slightly different form in the *Brut* and Fabyan, who also give the first stanza of a song said to have been sung by the Scots in mockery of the English after Bannockburn:

perefore pe Scottes saide, in reprofe and despite of Kyng Edward, foralsemiche as he louede forto go by watere, and also for he was descomfitede at Bannokesboume, perfore maidenes made a songe perof, in pat centre, of Kyng Edward of Engeland and in pis maner pai songe:—

Maydenes of Engelande, sare may 36 morne,
For tynt 36 haue 3oure lemmans at Bannokesborn
wip hevalogh.
What wende pe Kyng of Engeland haue ygete Scotlande
wip Rombylogh.

Fabyan gives the same stanza, and adds that,

This songe was after many dayes sungyn, in daunces, in carolis of ye maydens & mynstrellys of Scotlande, to the reproofe and dysdayne of Englysshe men, wt dyuerse other whiche I ouer passe.[1]

The reference in the *Brut* to Edward's preference for travelling by water is at first sight rather obscure, but in the romance of *Richard Coeur de Lion* we hear how the mariners

. . . rowede hard, and sungge ther too:
'With heuelow and rumbeloo'.[2]

Apparently these words were distinctive of the refrain of sailors' songs, and hence their use here.

The Scottish chroniclers are for the most part too late to give much information on this subject. Presumably the popular songs of the earlier period were forgotten by the time they came to write, and they had few literary sources on which to draw. Yet Wyntoun gives four lines of a song said to have been sung by the English against Black Agnes of Dunbar:

Off pis ilk sege in hething
The Inglismen maid oft carping:
'I wow to God, scho beris hir weill,
The Scottis wenche with her ploddeill;
For cum I airly, cum I lait,
I fynd ay Annes at pe 3ait.'

Earlier on Wyntoun has referred to the 'gestis and sangis' current concerning Wallace, but gives no quotation from them;[3] and similarly Barbour tells of songs still current

[1] F. W. D. Brie, *op.cit.*, p. 208; Fabyan, p. 420.
[2] H. Weber, *Metrical Romances* (Edinburgh 1810) ii, 99.
[3] F. J. Amours, *op.cit.* vi, 90; v, 318.

dealing with a fight between Sir John de Soulis and Sir Andrew Harcla.[1] Elsewhere we hear how, in 1332, on the night before the battle of Dupplin, the Scottish troops went to bed singing songs about the tailed Englishmen, a common taunt against the English in medieval times.[2] Inspired, according to Bower, more by wine than by warlike energy, they sang how they would on the morrow turn their tails into ropes to bind them as prisoners; or, according to another version, with a reference to the preliminary degradation before capital punishment for treason, of how they would draw the English to the gallows by their tails.[3]

Such soldiers' songs were not, of course, concerned only with the Scots. We read also of songs against the Flemings. So, on the failure of an attempted siege of Calais:

> amonges Englisshmen were made many rymes of pe Flemmynges; among the which, one is here sette for a remembraunce, that saith on this wise:—
>
> (66 lines of verse against the Flemings).
>
> such & many opir rymes were made amonge Englisshmen, aftir the Flemmynges were thus shamfully fled frome Caleis.[4]

Another example is given later, but both read much more like literary productions than popular songs.

[1] W. W. Skeat, *The Bruce* (EETS. ES. n, 21, 29, 55) xvi, 519 ff.
[2] On the development of the legend see G. Neilson, *Caudatus Anglicus* (Edinburgh 1896).
[3] Bower ii, 304-5; *Liber Pluscardensis* i, 265.
[4] F. W. D. Brie, *op.cit.*, pp. 582 if., 600 ff.

XI

DRAMA

LITTLE is known of the drama in England before 1300, though presumably this country took its share in the general development. Few texts are extant, but the religious drama was essentially international and occasional allusions indicate that, as we should expect, it was being staged in England as in the rest of Western Europe. In this country the earliest reference appears to belong to the very beginning of the 12th century. A certain Geoffrey, a Norman clerk and prospective schoolmaster of St Albans, prepared a *Indus de sancta Katerina* at Dunstable. For it he borrowed certain copes from the monastery which, unfortunately, were accidentally burned. This seems to have affected him so much that he became a monk, and by 1119 had been elected abbot of St Albans.[1] Nothing more is heard of plays in this country until the end of the same century when, according to a description of London written by William FitzStephen and prefixed to his life of Becket:

> London, in place of shows in the theatre and stage plays, has holier plays, wherein are shown forth the miracles wrought by Holy Confessors or the sufferings which glorified the constancy of Martyrs.[2]

The cathedral statutes of Bishop Hugh of Lichfield (i 188-98) provide for the Pastores at Christmas and the Quern Quaeritis

[1] *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani* (RS. 28, iv, I, 73).

* William FitzStephen, *Vita Sancti Thomae* (RS. 67, iii, 9).

and Peregrini at Easter.[1] These are the only references to 12th-century plays, but there is no reason to believe that they are at all comprehensive, or that plays had not previously been acted in these particular towns. It is not improbable that during the I2th century plays were being produced in many of the big towns, though all record of them has been lost.

This 12th-century drama was, of course, the liturgical Latin drama of the Church, and why examples of it should be so rare in England is not an easy question to answer. Perhaps the ravages at the dissolution of the monasteries may have had something to do with it. A more probable reason is that by the middle of the 14th century drama had passed into the hands of the laity, and that this later secular and vernacular drama displaced the liturgical drama of the Church. In the first place, however, the liturgical drama was replaced by plays of a transitional kind in which one of the vernaculars is prominent, although elements inherited from the Church plays are still conspicuous.

References to plays in the I3th century are not improbably to this transitional type, though it is rare for any clue to be given by which we can be certain of this. One of the earliest comes from Beverley. A 13th-century continuator of the life of St John of Beverley tells of a recent miracle (c. 1220) in the Minster. An Easter play was being acted in the churchyard, and so great a crowd had gathered that some boys entered the

[1] C. Wordsworth, *Statutes of Lincoln Cathedral* (Cambridge 1892-7) ii, 15, 23. In 1179 Giraldus Cambrensis, whilst dining with the monks of Canterbury, noted the excessive use of signs by the monks and the prior, expressing themselves in this way far more easily and freely than was fitting, almost as seemed to Giraldus to be done 'ad ludos scenicos aut inter histriones et joculatores' (RS. 21, i, 51; cf. 21, iv, 41). Similarly Ailred of Rievaulx 'regrets that histrionic gestures more suitable for the theatre than the oratory have entered the liturgy' (A. P. Rossiter, *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* (London 1950), p. 49).

church, found a door open leading to the roof, and went to view the play from there. The watchmen, fearing for the safety of the glass, gave chase and beat them, with the result that one of the boys fell to the ground and lay as if dead, but was miraculously restored to life by the merits of the saint.[1] Since the play took place in the churchyard, it had at any rate one of the characteristics of the transitional type. An inventory of the goods of Salisbury Cathedral (1222) includes a crown of silver and two of lead, and may be an indication that plays were acted there.[2] In an award, made between 1220 and 1228, concerning the rights of collation to churches at Shipton-under-Wychwood and Brickelsworth, both of which were prebends of Salisbury, there is a reference to *actiones* at various of the villages. The word is difficult; Ducange gives it in the sense *spectacula,* and the editors can explain it only as 'plays'.[3] If this be the sense of the word, then plays must have been more frequent in Oxfordshire during the I3th century than might have been expected. Some time about 1244 Bishop Grosseteste mentions 'clerici ludos quos vocant miracula' amongst the things which the archdeacons are, as far as possible, to drive out of the diocese.[4] A sermon (c. 1250) from an unspecified and unknown locality invites the congregation to a play on St Nicholas, and since the sermon contains English as well as Latin it seems probable that the play also may have been in a mixture of the two languages.[5] At York the traditional statutes, which are supposed to date in their present form from c. 1255, provide for the *Pastores* and *Stella.*[6]

To what extent English was used in these 13th-century

[1] *Historians of the Church of York* (RS. 71, i, 328).
[2] *Register of St Osmund* (RS. 78, ii, 129).
[3] *Sarum Charters and Documents* (RS. 97, 104).
[4] *Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae* (RS. 25, 317-18).
[5] *Studies in Philology* xxviii, 594-601.
[6] C, Wordsworth, *op.cit.* ii, 98.

plays is impossible to say. Some of them sound like the usual liturgical plays, while others, as for example that at Beverley, have some of the characteristics of the transitional type. In fact, this type is represented in England by only three, or possibly four, fragments, only one of which dates from the 13th century. This is a fragment, probably from the last quarter of the i3th century, containing 22 lines in French and the same number in English. Neither is a translation of the other, but the general tenor is identical—an appeal to the audience by the officers of a pagan 'Emperor* to keep quiet and not interrupt the 'game', on pain of dire punishment.[1] The next, in a 14h-century hand, is written on the back of a manorial roll, from Rickinghall in Suffolk. It contains a single complete stanza in French and English, and part only of a following stanza—the stage directions being as usual in Latin.[2] So far as we can tell the fragment seems to have been a waste scrap, discarded because of mistakes by the copyist, and afterwards economically used for manorial accounts. There is no indication of its original provenance, though Bury seems a likely enough guess.

Another fragmentary text of this type, apparently not written before the 15th century, has been discovered at Shrewsbury. It contains the parts, with cues, of a single actor in three plays (the *Pastores, Quern Quaeritis* and *Peregrinus)* and shows how the Latin text was first sung by a group of performers and then expanded by them separately in the vernacular.[3] Also from the 15th century is what may be the fragment of a passion play from Worcester. The Cathedral Library MS. F. 10 contains a collection of sermons; and on f. 25, in the middle of a sermon otherwise entirely in Latin, are a number of English verses, interspersed with Latin,

[1] *MLN*. Ixv, 30-35.

[1] *Times Literary Supplement,* 1921, p. 340.

[3] Ed. O. Waterhouse, *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays* (EETS. ES. 104), pp. 1-7.

which, it has been suggested, may be taken from some passion play of the transitional type. They certainly read not unlike it, but at the same time similar English verses are found often enough in other Latin sermons.[1]

During the 14th century there are references to occasional plays at various places. Probably most of them, if not entirely in English, were mainly so, since many of the places are so small that it is difficult to believe that enough Latin-speaking people could have been collected to produce the play. At Cambridge, c. 1350, William de Lenne and Isabella his wife, on their entrance into a guild, give half a mark towards the expenses of a play on the 'Children of Israel'.[2] According to Warton, the earliest notice of Latin plays at an English university is to be found in various expenses, under the year 1386, in a fragment of an old account roll of the dissolved college of Michael House at Cambridge.[3] However, he gives only a very general reference which cannot now be traced. The accounts of the chamberlain of King's Lynn for 1385 include gifts of money for an interlude on Corpus Christi day and for another interlude of St Thomas the Martyr. In 1449 an ordinance, made by the Mayor and Council for the better government of the craft of the Tailors, enacts that various fines, &c., 'shal go to the sustentacioun of the procession upon Corpus Christi day', and in 1462 the accounts note expenses by 'the Mayor and the most of his brethren' while watching 'a certain play at the Feast of Corpus Christi'.[4] From Bury comes a certificate or return, drawn up in 1389, describing the foundation and customs of the guild of Corpus Christi of that town. These include the maintenance of an *interludium de Corpore Christi*, but no further information is given.[5] Also

[1] J. K. Floyer & S. G. Hamilton, *Worcester Cathedral Library Manuscripts* (Oxford 1906), pp. 5 ff.

[2] *Cambridge Antiquarian Society: Octavo Series* **xxxix,** pp. 51 ff.

[3] Warton Hi, 302.

[4] *HMC. Southampton and King's Lynn,* pp. 223, 165 ff., 224.

[5] *MLN.* xlviii, 84.

from the I4th century is a brief mention of mystery plays acted in the parish church at Hedon in the East Riding.[1]

In the 15th century references to these occasional plays are much more frequent. It is probable that many of them were acted regularly every year, and had been for some time, though the fragmentary nature of the records does not allow this to be definitely stated. The accounts of Maxstoke Priory (1430) include a note that the *pueri eleemosyni* of the monastery had acted a play on the Feast of the Purification in the neighbouring castle belonging to Lord Clinton.[2] The churchwardens' accounts of Tintinhull, Somerset, include the receipt of money in 1451-2 from 'a play called Christmasse play', which must certainly have been in English.[3] In 1452 the wardens of Harling, Norfolk, paid for the 'original of an Interlude played at the Church gate'.[4] The town accounts of Lydd show a 'play of Seint George' in 1456, and in 1490 the chaplain of the guild of St George at New Romney went to see a play at Lydd with a view to reproducing it.[5] At New Romney itself John Craye and Thomas a Nasshe, wardens of the play of the Resurrection, brought an action for debt and damages against John Lylye in 1456.[6] In 1463-4 6s. *8d.* was paid to Agnes Forde for the play of the interlude of Our Lord's Passion. The *Playbook* is mentioned in 1516, and included in an Elizabethan inventory, while in 1517-18 'the serjeant of the Lord Warden brings a mandate to the Barons of New Romene here, that they ought not to play the play of the Passion of Christ until they had had the King's leave'.[7] In 1461

[1] J. R. Boyle, *The Early History of Hedon* (Hull 1895), p. 140.
[2] Warton iii, 312.
[3] W. Hobhouse, *Churchwardens' Accounts* (Somerset Record Society), p. 184.
[4] *Norfolk Archaeology* xi, 338; J. C. Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts* (London 1913), p. 268.
[5] *HMC., 5th Report,* Appendix, pp. 521, 548.
[6] *HMC., 6th Report,* Appendix, p. 541.
[7] *HMC., 5th Report,* Appendix, pp. 544 ff.

the churchwardens' accounts of St Edmond's, Salisbury, include an item 'for all apparel and furniture of players at the Corpus Christi';[1] those of St Nicholas, Yarmouth, mention plays on Corpus Christi day in 1473 and 1486, and a play at Bartholomew-tide in I489,[2] and those of St Margaret, Southwark, include payments for plays on the feasts of St Margaret and St Lucy from 1453 onwards.[3] At Bury in 1477 the by-laws of the Weavers mention 'amongge other pagents' that of 'the Assencion of our Lord God and of the giftys of the Holy Cost'.[4] No further information is given, and it is uncertain whether the pageants included plays or not. The accounts for 1480 of the guild of the Holy Trinity, Sleaford, include a payment 'for the Ryginall of ye play of ye Ascencon & the wrytyng of spechys & payntyng of a garment for God'.[5] Items in the accounts for 1482 of St Michael's, Bath, suggest the production of a Quern Quaeritis.[6] At Hull some of the Trinity House accounts, those for example for 1483 and 1494, show numerous expenses in connexion with a play of Noah. In 1487-8 they record a payment for the writing of the play, while a sum paid in 1484 for 'playng pe spech of God' shows that it was not a dumb-show but an actual play.[7] At Winchester Henry VII was entertained at dinner in 1487 with a performance of the *Descensus Christi ad inferos* by the 'pueri eleemosynarii' of St Swithin's and Hyde Abbey.[8] Entries concerning plays are frequent in the accounts of St Laurence, Reading, from 1498 onwards.[9] A play of St George was held

[1] *Calendar of State Papers—Domestic, Addenda* (1580-1625), p. 101.
[2] *Norfolk Archaeology* xi, 334.
[3] J. C. Cox, *op.cit.*, p. 268.
[4] *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey* (RS. 96, iii, 361).
[5] E. K. Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage* (Oxford 1903) ii, 395.
[6] *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* vii, 315.
[7] G. Hadley, *History of Kingston-upon-Hull* (Hull 1788); *MLR.* xxxiii, 489.
[8] Warton iii, 163.
[9] J. C. Cox, *op.cit.*, p. 269.

at Bassingbourne in 1511. The accounts for it are still extant and include the expenses for some of the properties and also for the 'playe book'.[1] References to plays in the 16th century are very frequent, but for the most part fall outside our period.

In most of these references there is evidence of only a single play; and since they are in the main comparatively small places it is likely that they did produce only one play in the year, though no doubt this was given as regularly as possible and frequently shown in the neighbouring villages. In some of the more important towns, however, there is Evidence for the performance of scenes by the various guilds in the manner of the extant cycles of miracle plays. Often enough the evidence does not allow us to decide whether these scenes were regular plays or merely pantomimes; but if any of the following towns did present a series of plays it has long since been lost, unless perhaps some survive amongst the extant unlocalized plays.

At Beverley the earliest record of the Corpus Christi plays occurs in 1377 in the 'Ordinacio cissorum de expensis pagine et ludi Corporis Christi'. In 1390 a list is given of the 38 guilds which are to take part in the plays, and already in that year the plays are 'an ancient custom'. Occasionally the title of one is given, as for example in 1391, when the Hairers undertake to 'produce in a satisfactory manner the play called *Paradise'*. In 1392 the Smiths were fined 40. for not giving their play as required. They duly handed it over and, as a reward for their obedience, it was returned to them on condition that if they failed again they should pay 100s. At the beginning of the 15th century there appears to have been some disaffection in the town because the wealthier citizens took no part in the plays. Consequently, regulations were drawn up to compel their participation. Three years later the ordinances of the 'Barbitonsores', 'ordained and used from of old', but first written down or codified in 1414, provide that

[1] *The Antiquary* vii, 24 ff.

'they play or cause to be played a pageant of the aforesaid St John baptizing Christ in the Jordan, yearle;. In 1493 the Mercers and Drapers split, and this led to a re-arrangement of the plays, the Mercers doing *Black Herod* and the Drapers *Denting Pilate.* In the 16th century references to the plays continue. In 1520-1 a fine of *2S.* is received from Richard Trollopp, alderman of the 'paynetors', 'because their play of *The Three Kings of Culleyn* was badly and confusedly played, in contempt of the whole community, before many strangers'; *is.* was received from Richard Gaynstang, alderman of the 'talours', 'because his play of *Slepyng Pilate* was badly played contrary to the order thereof made'; and 2*s.* from William Patson, alderman of the drapers, 'for his play being badly played'. From about 1520 we have a complete list of the guilds and the plays for which they were responsible:

Tylers: the fallinge of Lucifer.
Saddelers: the makinge of the World.
Walkers: makinge of Adam and eve.
Ropers: the brekinge of the Comaundments of God.
Crelers: gravinge and spynnynge.
Glovers: Cayn.
Shermen: Adam and Seth.
Wattermen: Noe Shipp.
Bowers and Fletshers: Abraham and Isaak.
Musterdmakers and Chanlers: Salutation of Our Lady.
Husbandmen: Bedleem.
Vynteners: Sheipherds.
Goldsmyths: Kyngs of Golan.
Fyshers: Symeon.
Cowpers: fleynge to Egippe.
Shomakers: Children of Ysraell.
Scryveners: Disputacion in the Temple.
Barbours: Sent John Baptyste.
Laborers: the Pynnacle.
The Mylners: rasynge of Lazar.
Skynners: ierusalem.
Bakers: the Mawndy.
Litsters: prainge at the Mownte.
Tailyours: Slepinge Pilate.
Marchaunts: Blak Herod.
Drapers: Demynge Pylate.
Bocheours: Scorgynge.
Cutlers & Potters: the Stedynynge.
Wevers: the Stanginge.
Barkers: the Takinge of the Crose.
Cooks: Haryinge of hell.
Wrights: the Resurrection.
Gentylmen: Castle of Emaut.
Smyths: Ascencion.
Prestes: Coronacion of Our Lady.
Marchaunts: Domesday.

After 1520, although the plays probably still continued for some time, no further mention occurs in the existing records. In addition to the Corpus Christi plays a second craft play appears in 1469, when 39 of the guilds joined to give a *Paternoster Play* on the Sunday after St Peter ad Vincula, copies of the text being made for the different crafts.[1]

At Durham a weavers' ordinance of 1450 mentions that they are to play their play 'yat of old time longed to yaire craft', and as late as 1567 there is mention of the players of Durham acting at Newcastle.[2] From 1394 onwards the accounts of Wells Cathedral show expenses in connexion with plays,[3] but only rarely are indications given which allow any of the plays to be identified. From Doncaster 16th-century records alone are available, and only the *Fisher Play* is mentioned by name.[4]

At Canterbury there is no record of the Corpus Christi plays before the end of the 15th century. The evidence however suggests that they had in fact been acted fairly regularly in the past, but had later fallen into disuse. An inventory of the church goods of St Dunstan's, Canterbury, drawn up in 1500, includes various copies of the Corpus Christi plays; but by this date the crafts had become reduced in numbers, and the play appears to have been in danger of disappearing. An attempt was made to restore it by a Burgmote order, the effect of which is unknown. In 1503 the corporation paid for a play of the *Three Kyngs of Cokyns* in the Guildhall, after which, apart from references to a 'pageant of St Thomas' which seems to have been a dumb-show, nothing is heard of any later plays at Canterbury. In addition to the above, a play of *Abraham and Isaac* appears to have been given by the

[1] A. F. Leach, *Beverley Town Documents* (Selden Society xiv), pp. 45, 33, 37, 36, 34, 99; *Furnivatt Miscellany*, pp. 205 ff.
[2] *Archaeologia Aeliana* xi, 36, 47.
[3] *HMC. Dean and Chapter of Wells* ii, 29 ff.
[4] H. C. Gardiner, *Mysteries' End* (New Haven 1946), p. 123.

parochial guild of St Dunstan during the I5th century, but to have been discontinued as early as 1491.[1]

At Hereford the evidence for the existence of plays is slight. A letter from Bishop Richard de Swinfield to the Dean threatens action against those consorting with Jews, 'whether in eating, drinking, or in the production of plays';[2] but no other references appear until 1440 when John Hauler and John Pewte sue Thomas Sporyour 'because of the detention of a book of plays worth 2s. 4d.'. In the Corporation Register under the year 1503 is a list of 'the paiants for the procession of Corpus Christi*, but they read more like dumb-shows than plays.[3]

At Ipswich the former Guild Merchant was reconstituted as a guild of Corpus Christi in 1325, but the extant constitutions provide only for a procession. In 1491 an order was made 'howe euery occupacion of Craftsmen schuld order themselves in the goyng with their pageantes in the procession of Corpus Christi'; but the subjects of the pageants are not given and we cannot be sure that they included plays. However, in 1504 the 'collectors for the play of Corpus Christi' were allowed to 'make a free burgess for their exppenses at the Corpus Christi play'.[4]

There were certainly plays at Leicester during the I5th century, since in 1477 it was debated whether the passion play 'shulbe put to craftes to be bounden or nay';[5] but little more is heard of it, and although the accounts of the churches of St Mary and of St Martin* include payments for plays and

[1] *Archaeologia Cantiana* xvi, 312 ff.; xvii, 147, 80; *HMC., 9th Report,* Appendix, p. 147.

[2] W. W. Capes, *Registrant Ricardi de Swinfield* (Canterbury and York Soc. 1909), pp. 121 ff.

[3] *HMC., Rye and Hereford,* pp. 300, 288.

[4] *HMC., 9th Report,* Appendix, pp. 241 ff.

[5] M. Bateson, *Records of the Borough of Leicester* (London 1901) ii, 297.

players during the last decades of the i5th century, no titles or subjects are given.

At Lincoln there appear to have been two main sources of drama, the cathedral clergy and the guilds; and these, so far as we can tell, continue to produce plays separately until the 15th century, when they apparently begin to co-operate. The earliest mention of drama in the cathedral is to be found in a commentary on Boethius, now at New College, Oxford, and formerly belonging to William Wheatly, master of grammar at Lincoln. It contains two hymns addressed to St Hugh of Lincoln which 'a certain young clerk [Wheatly], master of Lincoln Grammar School in the year 1316, composed for a play on Christmas Day, in which year there was great scarcity and mortality among men and animals, intending to comfort himself and others in their misery'.[1] In 1317-18 the cathedral accounts have a note of expenses in connexion with a play on the *Three Kings of Cologne,* and in 1321-2 a play of *St Thomas* appears.-So far as the cathedral is concerned, these two plays continue to be given until the end of the 14th century, though the performances do not appear to have been regular. They are supplanted by a *Salutation of the Virgin,* given at Christmas matins, which is performed as a custom until 1465. In the 15th century the *Assumption* or *Coronation of the Virgin* is established and appears regularly until the Reformation.[2] The town also had dramatic performances, though nothing is heard of them until the end of the 14th century. Among the rolls of Bishop Lexington's episcopal register, in the Bishop's Registry, is one containing a list of the municipal officials of Lincoln, and including also occasional notices of notable events, among others occasional references to plays given in the town. Thus a *Paternoster Play* is noted as having been performed in 1397, 1411, 1425, 1457; plays on St Laurence

[1] *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 1913-14, p. 444.

[2] *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America lii;* 946 ff.

(1442), St Susanna (1448), King Robert of Sicily (1453), St Clara (1456), and a Corpus Christi Play (1472, 1474). Another writer mentions a *Ludo de Sancto Iacobo,* apparently quoting from the same document. In 1478-80 the Chapter *Curialitates* include expenses in connexion with a Corpus Christi play, and in 1521 the corporation agreed 'that Paternoster Play shall be played this year'.[1]

After the incidental reference by FitzStephen nothing further is known of plays in London until the 14th century. According to Dodsley the scholars of St Paul's presented a petition to Richard II in 1378 'to prohibit some unexpert people from presenting the History of the Old Testament, to the great prejudice of the said clergy, who have been at great expence in order to represent it publickly at Christmas'.[2] Dodsley's source cannot now be discovered, and in fact the earliest reference after FitzStephen is to be found in a petition (c. 1300) from the prioress of St Mary, Clerkenwell, complaining of damage to the crops and fields of the convent caused by people attending miracle plays and wrestlings. The petition is endorsed with a direction that the constable of the vill should take action to prevent damage being done, but he appears to have failed in his duty since a writ was issued later against the 'wrestlings and miracle plays' at Clerkenwell.[3] Under the year 1384 the continuation to Higden's *Polychronicon* by John Malvern notes a play, given by the clerks of London, at Skinnerswell, which lasted for five days. In 1391 they produced another play at the same place lasting four days in which was displayed much of the Old and New Testaments.[4] On the occasion of Richard IFs expedition to Scotland a proclamation by the Mayor and Aldermen (1385) forbids

[1] *Furnivall Miscellany,* pp. 222 ff.; C. Wordsworth, *Statutes of Lincoln Cathedral* (Cambridge 1892-7) ii, 139.

[2] R. Dodsley, *A Select Collection of Old Plays* (London 1780) i, xxxix.

[3] *MLR.* xxxiii, 564.

[4] Higden ix, 47, 259.

the play that customarily took place at 'Skynneres weir.[1] In 1392 the *London Chronicle* mentions a play 'of seynt Katerine'; in 1409 it notes a play at Skinners Welle 'which endured Wednesday, Thorsday, Fryday, and on Soneday it was ended';[2] and an even longer play, lasting seven days, is recorded in the *Chronicle of the Greyfriars* (1411).[3] After this there is a gap until I5o8,[4] apparently due rather to the fragmentary state of the records than to any interruption in the production of plays. Apart from these longer plays, given apparently by the clerks in minor orders, there are indications of plays in the churchwardens' accounts of some of the London churches, but the notices are vague and no titles appear to be given.

At Louth an inventory (1516) of the documents in the rood-loft includes the 'hole regenall of Corpus Christi play',[5] but the only other notice of plays there is of one 'in the markitstede on corpus christi day' in 1558, for which the corporation paid.[6] At Reading the churchwardens' accounts of St Laurence's contain frequent records of expenses in connexion with plays from 1498 ohwards, with direct mention of the *Kings of Cologne, Adam and Eve,* the *play of Kayme* and the *Resurrection play.*[7] Pageants are mentioned in the ordinances of Worcester (1467), though whether these included plays must remain doubtful.[8]

Most of the extant plays date from the 15th century. Where

[1] *MLR.* xxxiii, 564.
[2] N. H. Nicolas & E. Tyrrell, *A Chronicle of London* (London 1827), pp. 80, 91.
[3] *Monumenta Frandscana* (RS. 4, ii, 164).
[4] *Annales Henrici VII* (RS. 10, 121).
[5] R. C. Dudding, *The First Churchwardens' Book of Louth* (Oxford 1941), p. 182.
[6] R. W. Goulding, *Louth Records* (Louth 1891), p. 55.
[7] C. Kerry, *History of St Lawrence, Reading* (Reading 1883), p. 233.
[8] T. Smith, *English Gilds* (EETS. 40), pp. 385, 407.

there is evidence for the earlier representation of plays, it is now impossible to say how far the extant plays represent those produced at an earlier date; whether they are simply modernizations or entirely different plays. More or less complete cycles still remain from Chester, York and Wakefield. In the second of these 48 plays still survive, but a blank has been left in the manuscript for the Ironmongers' *Visit to Simon the Leper,* which was never written in. Similarly, only the first line remains of the Vintner's play, the *Marriage at Cana;* and not even a blank has been left for the play of *Fergus,* which 15th-century records show to have been acted by the Linenweavers. At an earlier date it had apparently been performed by the Masons, who complained that it 'caused rather laughter and clamor than devotion', and in consequence were given *Herod,* one of the Goldsmith's plays. In 1476 the Linenweavers were undertaking *Fergus,* which was again discontinued in 1485, though in 1517 its revival was contemplated if not carried out. These three plays have been completely lost, and other records show that at one time or another there were independent plays on the *Washing of Feet, Casting of Lots, Hanging of Judas* and the *Burial of the Virgin,* which no longer exist as such, though parts of them may have been incorporated in the extant plays.[1] Nor does anything now remain of two other plays once produced at York, the *Paternoster Play* and the *Creed Play.* The earliest reference to the formjr occurs in the English version of Wyclif's *De Officio Pastor all* (i378);[2] the next information comes from a certificate or return sent by the York guild of the Paternoster to the King's Council in 1389, giving an account of the foundation, constitution, customs and property of the association. From this it appears that the primary function of the guild was to perform a play treating of the Lord's Prayer;

[1] L. T. Smith, *York Mystery Plays* (Oxford 1885), pp. xvii ff.; see also *SS.* cxxv, ii, 124.

[2] F. D. Matthew, *English Works of Wyclif* (EETS. 74), p. 429.

that the play represented the merits of the Lord's Prayer, along with pageants of the vices and virtues; and that the guild owned no property except the equipment of the play and a wooden chest for storage.[1] One of the scenes from the play is mentioned in some accounts of 1399, by which it appears that John Downom and his wife had owed *2s. zd.* for their entrance fee to the guild, 'but the aforesaid John affirmed that he had contributed 2s. ld. towards the expenses of the play *Accidie'*.[2] Again, in 1464 William Downham leaves to William Ball 'all my books of the Pater Noster play'.[3] During the 15th century the play seems to have passed into the hands of the Merchants' guild, since an entry in their records 'on the election daye of Thomas Scawsby, being master', ordains that four pageant-masters shall be chosen who shall be responsible for the production of the *Paternoster Play.4* Thomas Scawsby was master of the guild in 1462, but the four pageant-masters were apparently seldom, if ever, chosen before 1488. In the 16th century the play was substituted for the Corpus Christi plays, and in 1558 it is in the hands of St Anthony's, the master of which is charged to 'provyd for the playing of one play callyd Pater Noster play this yere'. This particular performance was evidently carried out, the last recorded one being in the year 1572, in the April of which year the council agreed that

> my Lord Mayor shall send for the maister of Saint Anthony's, and he to bryng with hym the booke of the play called the Pater Noster play, that the same may be perused, amended and corrected, and that my Lord Mayor shall certifie to theis presens at their next assemblee here of his pleasure to be taken therin.

The Lord Mayor evidently gave his approval, since in the following month the council directed that 'the Pater Noster play shalbe played this yere on the Thursday next after

[1] *Speculum* vii, 540-6.
[2] L. T. Smith, *York Mystery Plays* (Oxford 1885), p. xxix.
[3] *SS.* **xxx,** 268.
[4] *SS.* cxxix, 81.

Trynitie Sonday next comyng'. A few months later the Lord Mayor announced to the council that

> my Lord Archebisshop of York requested to have a copie of the bookes of the Pater Noster play, wherupon it was aggreed that His Grace shall have a trewe copie of all the said bookes even as they weare played this yere.

They were accordingly delivered to the archbishop and nothing more is heard of them. Nor is there anything to show that they were ever returned, either by him or by his successors, or that the play was ever performed again.[1] The exact character of the Pater Noster play is unknown; similar plays were given at Beverley and Lincoln, but none has survived, and the records have little to say of them beyond the bare fact of their presentation.[2]

The *Creed Play* is first heard of in the will of William Revetour (1446). His bequests include a copy of the *Pricke of Conscience,* an English version of the *Bible,* and, to the Corpus Christi guild of York, 'a certain book called *Le Crede Play,* along with the books and standards pertaining to it',[3] the play to be performed every tenth year 'in various places in the said city'. It is included in an inventory of 1465, and various performances are recorded, usually on or about August Ist. In 1535 the Corpus Christi plays were omitted and the crafts contributed 'pageant silver' to the *Creed Play,* but they refused to give way again in 1545. The guild was suppressed in 1547, the play passing into the hands of the hospital of St Thomas. In 1562 the corporation proposed the *Creed Play* on St Barnabas day as an alternative to 'thystories of the old and new testament'. In 1568 they again wished to replace the regular Corpus Christi plays by the *Creed Play,* but first submitted it to Matthew Hutton, dean of York, who advised that

[1] R. Davies, *Extracts from the Municipal Records of the City of York* (London 1843), PP- 265-72.

* *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* **xxxix,** 789 **ff.** [3] ***SS.*** **xxx,** 117.

thoghe it was plawsible to yeares agoe, and wold now also of the ignorant sort be well liked, yet now in this happie time of the gospell, I knowe the learned will mislike it, and how the state will beare with it, I knowe not.

Consequently the play was 'delyveryd in agayn', and nothing more is heard of it.[1] An undated letter of Henry VIII speaks of a riot which took place 'at the acting of a religious interlude of St Thomas the Apostle'. It has been suggested that the *Creed Play* may have included scenes dealing with the various apostles, of which this may have been one; but in any event no other reference appears to this particular interlude.[2] Nor is anything known of the play on St Denis which, in 1455, was left to the church in York of that name, though it may be assumed that at this date it was in English.[3]

In addition to the extant complete cycles, plays are also known from the cycles of Coventry, Newcastle and Norwich. The earliest reference to the Coventry plays occurs in a document of 1392-3, in which a certain tenement is described as 'between the tenement of the prior and convent on one side, and between the house for the pageant of the weavers of Coventry on the other'. During the 15th and i6th centuries references to the cycle are frequent in the municipal records, and in those of the different crafts. So far as can be decided, the number of crafts which supported pageants was small; an act of the leet, passed in 1445, shows that the number of crafts in Coventry at that time was 17. No doubt there were changes later, but the number never seerfts to have been great. Of these 17 crafts only 10 can be proved to have supported pageants, the remaining ones being contributory to those charged with the plays, or else contriving to evade the duty altogether. Moreover each play appears to have included

[1] E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford 1903) ii, 404-6.
[2] J. O. Halliwell, *Letters of the Kings of England* (London 1848) i, 354-
[3] E. K. Chambers, *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford 1945), p. 33.

a whole group of subjects; this being certainly true of the two extant ones, that of the Shearmen and Taylors and that of the Weavers:

Shearmen and Tailors . . . the Annunciation, the visit to Elizabeth, the Nativity, the Shepherds, the Kings of Cologne, the Flight into Egypt, the Massacre of the Innocents.
Weavers . . . the Purification, the Doctors in the Temple.

It is fairly certain that the remaining plays of the cycle, not now extant, also consisted of groups of subjects, and seven of these can be deduced with a fair amount of certainty from the municipal records:

Smiths . . . Christ before the High Priest, Pilate and Herod, the Denial, the Repentance of Judas, the Crucifixion.
Pinners and Needlers . . . the Death of Christ and the Burial.
Cappers . . . the Descent into Hell, the Resurrection, Peter and John at the Tomb, the Appearance of Christ to Magdalene and to the Travellers.
Mercers . . . the Death and Assumption of Mary, the Appearance of Mary to Thomas.
Drapers . . . Doomsday.

The records throw no light on the plays presented by the Tanners, Whittawers and Girdlers. Of this cycle of 10 plays, one of the most important of the period, only two are now extant, although all must have been written down since the records show frequent payments for copying or correcting them. Local annals occasionally record other plays, such as one on St Kathefine in 1491, one on St Christian in 1505, and three pageants ending 'with a goodly stage play' before Henry VIII and his queen in 15 lo.[1]

The Newcastle cycle is today represented only by the Shipwrights' play of *Noah.* The manuscript of this is no longer extant, and the play is known only from an iSth-century edition. The earliest mention of Corpus Christi plays at

[1] H. Craig, *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays* (EETS. ES. 87); see also M. D. Harris, *The Story of Coventry* (London 1911) p. 296,

Newcastle occurs under the year 1426 in an 'ordinary' of the Coopers, and other 15th-century references are not infrequent. It is quite clear that a complete cycle of plays existed here, and the subjects of twelve of them, together with the crafts responsible for their production, are known:

Bricklayers & Plasterers . . . the Creation of Adam.
Shipwrights . . . Noah's Ark.
Slaters . . . the Offering of Isaac.
Millers . . . the Deliverance of the Children of Israel.
Goldsmiths, Plumbers, Glaziers, Pewterers & Painters . . . the Three Kings of Cologne.
Bricklayers & Plasterers . . . the Flying of Our Lady into Egype.
Barbers & Chirurgeons with Chandlers . . . the Baptizing of Christ.
Fullers & Dyers . . . (the Last Supper).
Weavers . . . the bearing of the Cross.
House Carpenters . . . the Burial of Christ.
Tailors … the Descent into Hell.
Masons . . . the Burial of Our Lady Saint Mary the Virgin.

In addition, the Merchant Venturers were responsible for five plays, one of which was performed by the Ostmen and paid for by the town; but the titles are not known, nor are those of the plays of the remaining six guilds. A joiners' 'Ordinary' of 1589 seems to indicate that they themselves had no particular play, but assisted generally in the performances. As for the other five guilds, they may have had a play each, some of them may have joined to produce one, or some may have played more than one, as the Plasterers and Bricklayers certainly did. It seems certain that the whole cycle, when complete, must have included between 22 and 27 plays.[1]

The Norwich cycle is represented today only by the Grocers' play of the *Creation of Adam and Eve and the Fall.* This was copied into the *Grocers' Book,* since lost, and we are now dependent on an iSth-century transcript. The earliest

10. Waterhouse, *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays* (EETS. ES. 104), pp. **xxxv** fT.

reference to plays at Norwich dates from 1478, in which year J. Whetley writes to Sir John Paston of one of his servants that 'ther was never no man that playd Herrod in Corpus Crysty play better and more agreable to hys pageaunt than he dud'.[1] The first mention of the Corpus Christi procession occurs in 1489, when the order is given in which the 31 guilds of the town shall go in procession before the pageants, but nothing more appears before 1527. Up to that time the management of the plays, and the expenses in connexion with them, had been in the hands of St Luke's guild which, as a result, found itself in that year almost bankrupt, and petitioned the corporation to divide the responsibility and expense amongst the various guilds. The following division was then made, and recorded in the *Assembly Book* of the corporation:

Mercers, Drapers & Haberdashers . . . Creation off the World.
Glasiers, Steyners & Screveners, Parchmynters, Carpenters, Gravers, Caryers, Colermakers with Whelewrights . . . Helle Carte.
Grocers &f *Raffemen . . . Paradyse.*
Shermen, Fullers, Thikwollenwevers, Coverlightmakers, Masons & Lyme brenners . . . Abell & Cayn.
Bakers, Bruers, Inkepers, Coks, Millers, Vynteners & Coupers . . . Noyse Shipp.
Taillors, Broderers, Reders & Tylers . . . Abraham & Isaac.
Tanners, Coryors & Cordwaners . . . Moises and Aaron with the Children of Israel & Pharo with his Knyghts.
Smythes . . . Conflict off David & Goleas.
Dyers, Colauderers, Goldsmiths, Goldbeters, Sadelers, Pewtrers & Brasyers … the Berth off Christ with Sheperdes & iij Kyngs of Colen.
Barbours, Wexchandelers, Surgeons, Fisitians, Hardewaremen, Hatters, Cappers, Skynners, Glovers, Pynners, Poyntemakers, Girdelers, Pursers, Bdgmakers, Sceppers, Wyerdrawers & Cardmakers . . . the Baptysme of Criste.
Bochers, Fishmongers & Watermen . . . the Resurrection.
Worsted Wevers … the Holy Gost.

[1] J. Gairdner, *The Paston Letters* (London 1904) v, 321.

This appears to have been the complete cycle in the 16th century, but it seems unusually short and may have been longer in earlier times.[1]

The provenance of some of the extant plays is unknown, and it is not impossible that they may be identical with plays which are assumed to have been lost, though evidence in support of any ascription is lacking. A complete cycle is extant in the 42 plays of the so-called *Ludus Coventrise* which probably had nothing to do with that town. The only indication of provenance is the mention of 'N. towne' in the prologue. This has led to the ascription of them to Northampton or Norwich, but the evidence is slight and the term may simply be common form. Similarly, the Dublin *Abraham and Isaac* is only so called because the manuscript containing it is preserved at Trinity College, Dublin. In the same hand as the play is a list of the mayors and bailiffs of North(ampton) up to 1458, and a brief chronicle in which N(orthampton) is frequently mentioned. Connexion with that town has therefore been suggested, though nothing is known from any other source of plays at Northampton. The Brome *Abraham and Isaac* is preserved in a commonplace book of 1470-80 belonging to the owners of Brome Manor in Suffolk. Again nothing is known of its original provenance, and there is nothing to show that it ever formed part of a cycle. The prologue to the Croxton *Sacrament* says that it was played at Croxton, but it is impossible to decide which of the seven places of that name is meant. The four *Digby Plays* appear to have no connexion with each other apart from the fact that they have been copied into the same manuscript, and in none is there any hint of the provenance. The *Burial and Resurrection* is quite anonymous, and the only connexion of the *Shrewsbury Fragments* with that town is their presence in a manuscript belonging to the school there.

No plays have survived from either Ireland or Scotland,

[1] O. Waterhouse, *op.cit.*, pp. xxvi ff.

though there is some evidenjce for the former existence of dramatic literature in both countries. In Dublin the *Chain Book* of the city contains a memorandum of the Corpus Christi pageants, apparently written in 1498, though whether these were plays or only dumb-shows is still in dispute. They certainly read more like the latter, but some scholars take them to have been actual plays.[1] In the 16th century a mixture of plays was acted at Dublin before the earl of Kildare (1528):

> the taylors acted the part of Adam and Eve; the shoemakers represented the story of Crispin and Crispianus; the vintners acted Bacchus and his story; the Carpenters that of Joseph and Mary; Vulcan, and what related to him, was acted by the Smiths; and the comedy of Ceres, the goddess of corn, by the Bakers.

More certain evidence of Corpus Christi plays comes from Kilkenny. From a corporation record it is clear that a definite cycle, consisting of five plays only, was acted there, and that the book containing these plays was still in existence as late as 1637.[2]

In Scotland the earliest reference to a religious play occurs in 1440, when an entry in the *Aberdeen Council Register* mentions 'a certain play of *ly haliblude'*, presumably a passion play. It is mentioned again in 1445; and in 1449 Walter Balcancole, notary public, received 5s. for writing a Corpus Christi play, though whether he was simply recopying or rearranging the old *haliblude* play, or composing an entirely new one does not appear. In 1471 another play, *belly ale,* is mentioned, and in 1479 it was ordained that the expenses for the 'arayment & vfiris necessaris of pe play to be plait in the fest of corpus christi nixt tocum' were to be defrayed from common good funds. It is not before 1512-13 that there is any evidence for the association of the crafts with the Corpus

[1] J. J. Webb, *The Guilds of Dublin* (London 1929), pp. 53-5.
[2] E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford 1903) ii, 365; *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy,* section C, xli, 206.

Christ! celebrations, nor are pageants definitely mentioned in connexion with these before 1530. The pre-Reformation craft records of Aberdeen have been lost, but nevertheless it remains doubtful whether there was ever any definite cycle of religious plays performed there. The nature of the pageants seems to be against it, and suggests rather a dumb-show accompaniment to the religious procession.

The early records of Perth have disappeared, but in 1485 payments are made in connexion with a Corpus Christi play. Similar items recur in 1486 and 1487-8, but in no case is the name of the play given. A list of 'the playaris on corpus christie day and quhat money sail be payt till fame', in the craft book of the Hammermen under the year 1518, appears to indicate two plays, one on the Creation and Fall and the other on St Erasmus. The two apparently continued until 1553, when the play of St Erasmus disappeared, leaving only the Old Testament play. The Wrights' craft book, in 1530, has items of expenditure for repairing the play-gear, and it is not unlikely that there may have been at Perth a regular craft cycle of plays, though the fragmentary nature of the early records does not allow of any certainty. At Lanark there was certainly a Corpus Christi procession in the late I5th century. A (Corpus Christi play is mentioned in 1503, and the *Kingis of Cullane* in 1507. From Edinburgh there are no references to religious plays before the middle of the 16th century. They may have existed before that, but the records are incomplete and give little information on the subject. As far as the court is concerned, Patrick Johnson was paid £6 'for his plays' in 1475 and 1476, for 'certain amusements and plays' and 'for certain plays and interludes' in 1477, and there seems no reason to doubt that these were genuine plays. At the University of Glasgow the regulations for the annual celebration of the feast of the translation of St Nicholas mention an *interludium.*[1]

[1] A. J. Mill, *Mediaeval Plays in Scotland* (Edinburgh *1927), passim.*

DRAMA

There can be little doubt that an immense amount of dramatic literature from the medieval period has been lost. References to many single plays appear, and it is possible to reconstruct the outlines of some of the lost cycles. But it is probable that many occasional plays have vanished without a trace. Again, there are important towns which we should expect to have had cycles of craft plays whose municipal records do not begin until much later. No doubt the greater part of the lost drama was religious, and in all probability very similar to the extant plays; yet the plot of the Towneley *Secunda Pastorum* is a warning that we should not invariably judge the matter from the title alone.

Side by side with the religious drama there are some slight traces of the existence of a secular drama. The earliest example of this is a fragment, in an early 14th-century hand, written on the margin of an assize roll for 1250-1300 of Norfolk and Suffolk. It contains 268 verses, the consecutive speeches of a single personage in a play to which the title of *Dux Maraud* has been given.[1] The story evidently represented a version of the Incestuous Daughter theme, and, although frequently quoted as the earliest example of secular drama, is much more likely to have been a miracle play. If so, then the earliest example of secular drama is the fragmentary interlude *de Clerico et Puella,* written in an early 14th-century hand. It evidently told a similar story to that which appears in the somewhat earlier fabliau *Dame Siriz.* Parts of *Dux Maraud* and *de Clerico et Puella* have survived, but otherwise only vague references appear. In 1352 Bishop Grandisson of Exeter found himself compelled to thunder in reproof of a 'certain noxious and blameworthy play, or rather buffoonery, in scorn and insult to the leather-dressers and their art' of that city.[2] A London chronicle notes plays in 1444 of *Eglemour and Degrebelle* at St Albans, and of a *Knight cleped Florence* at

[1] Ed. *Anglia* **xxx,** 180 ff.

[2] G. G. Coulton, *Social Life in Britain* (Cambridge 1918), p. 494.

Bermondsey, presumably taken from the romances of *Sir Eglamour of Artois* and *Le Bone Florence of Rome.*[1] In a 15th-century manuscript is preserved the fragment of a play on Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham, which no doubt is to be connected with the reference to the same play in the *Paston Letters.*[2]

This is all that has survived of the secular drama, and the evidence is much too slight for any indication of the extent of such literature during the Middle English period. The date of the references suggests that it was a comparatively late development, and the competition of the religious drama may have prevented it from ever becoming extensive. Anyhow, these fragments and references are all that remain of a class of medieval literature of which no complete example has survived.

[1] E. K. Chambers, *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford 1945), P- 65.

[2] *Malone Society Collections* i, 117 ff.

XII

CONCLUSION

'YET it is safe to say that if the lost poetry had been preserved, the whole history of English literature, prior to Chaucer and Langland, would appear to us in a different light. The homilies and lives of saints, which bulk so largely in Medieval English verse and prose, would subside till they occupied a just, and a small, proportion of our attention.'[1] Such was the opinion of the first scholar to emphasize the fact that any attempt to estimate the achievement of medieval English literature must take into account that which has been lost as well as that which has survived. An attempt has here been made to discover how far such a statement is justified.

The plan of this survey has intentionally followed that of the usual histories of Old and Middle English literature, so that comparison of what has survived with what has been lost can the more easily be made. Such a scheme inevitably has its dangers; more particularly it tends to conceal the very uneven value of the evidence for the former existence of the lost literature. Sometimes the evidence is so strong that the one-time existence of a particular work may be taken for granted; sometimes the evidence can suggest little beyond the bare possibility that a certain work once existed; and more often than not the evidence will fall somewhere between these two extremes. Moreover, in all probability much of the lost literature never had a written existence. In spite of this there seems no good reason for

[1] *Trans. Bib. Soc.* v, 294.

restricting the term 'literature* to what is written down, more particularly during the Middle Ages when oral composition was at least as important as written.

If this wider definition of 'literature' is accepted, the most obvious result of comparing the histories of the extant and lost literatures, is to strengthen the impression that neglect of the literature now lost has distorted the outline of medieval English literature. And this distortion is due more particularly to the fact that the chapter on Historical Narrative usually has no place at all in the text-books. So far as the heroic literature is concerned little emerges that is new. It has long been recognized that the extant heroic poetry is only a small part of that which formerly existed, and in the main the chapter on the subject simply supplies evidence for this. It shows, too, that many of the heroes were still known during the Middle English period, though probably it often happened that little remained beyond the name. On the other hand, the available evidence gives no support whatever to the usual thesis that heroic poetry was gradually ousted by romance. In the Old English period there are signs that the place of the heroic poetry was gradually taken by subjects from later Anglo-Saxon history; and it is these subjects, frequently it would appear treated in the heroic manner, which were more immediately fatal to the older epic and heroic themes. The-chapter on historical narrative makes it clear that the usual restriction of the title in text-books to the extant historical poems has resulted in the neglect of what was in fact the most important type of narrative during the Old English period. No doubt such neglect is mairjy due to the fact that, whether in prose or verse, it was essentially an oral literature of which little beyond the general outline now remains, so that any critical appreciation of it is largely impossible. The distortion of the outlines of the early literature is, moreover, exaggerated by the stress on religious epic, a type of poetry which usually occupies much more space

than is warranted by its importance or influence. It appears to have been essentially a literary development due to ecclesiastical influence, an attempt to substitute religious subjects for the suspect heroic or historical narrative; and there is little reason to believe that the attempt met with much success outside ecclesiastical circles. So far as we can tell it exerted little influence on later literature, and its place was soon taken by the vernacular lives of the saints, which had no need to ape heroic legend and depended for their appeal on the accumulation of marvels from apocryphal legend. Signs of such a change are already apparent in some of the works of Cynewulf, where the heroic atmosphere is becoming less conspicuous. The investigation suggests, too, that comparatively little of importance in Old English 'religious and didactic prose has been completely lost, most of the references being to lost versions of works still in existence. Had the entire output of this prose survived, it is improbable that much would need to be added to modern accounts.[1] The lives of the saints were, of course, always a popular subject, and the ideal complete account of medieval literature would still find it necessary to allot to them a comparatively large amount of space. In addition, it would note that, side by side with the written lives there existed a flourishing oral literature, centred more particularly in the persons of the native saints—a literature which was in fact simply a special branch of historical narrative.

In the Middle English period little seems to have been lost from the three great Matters of romance. Here again it is clear that the extant romances on these subjects were essentially part of a written literature, and that in all probability the analogous Matter of England, which was mainly oral, was more popular than any of the romances of the more conventional Matters. It is probable that the lost oral narratives had little in common with the extant romances of the Matter of England, since these are translations from earlier French

[1] Apart of course from an additional chapter on narrative prose.

versions and have been considerably influenced by the written romances. As far as the shorter narrative is concerned, there is reason to believe that it was formerly much more extensive; and that, for example, the few extant early examples of the fabliau and the beast tale are no trustworthy guide to the real popularity of such themes during this period. The religious and didactic literature occupies a similar position to that in Old English. It is clear that a chapter dealing with it must be important and lengthy; but it is equally clear that few important works have completely vanished, the most frequent losses being other versions of still extant works. It has always been recognized that comparatively little of the secular lyrical poetry has been preserved; but it has not been fully appreciated that the lyric was at home in England at a much earlier date than one might have supposed. The earliest complete examples date from the late 13th century, and their perfection and technical excellence would suggest that they are far from the beginnings of such literature. In fact, the references make it clear that the lyric was well established in England at least as early as the first half of the 12th century. In dramatic literature, apart from the possible existence of a secular drama, little of interest emerges. It is obvious enough that many complete cycles of craft plays, and numerous single plays, have vanished, but there is little to suggest that these lost plays differed at all from the extant examples.

INDEX

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

Printed in Great Britain by
Butler & Tanner Ltd.,
Frome and London