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### THE DATE OF THE IRELAND MANUSCRIPT.

The Ireland Manuscript, one of the more important sources of Middle English romance, has been for several centuries in the family of Major Ireland Blackburne of Hale Hall, Liverpool. The three romances it contains—"The Anturs of Arther," "Sir Amadace" and "The Avowyng of King Arther," this last found in no other manuscript—were edited by J. Robson in *Three Early English Metrical Romances* (Camden Society, 1842). Abbreviations are there silently extended, the capitalisation is modernised, and 'th' and 'þ' are both represented by 'th'; but, if allowance be made for this, the text is remarkably accurate. The date c. 1400-1413,<sup>1</sup> accepted by later writers, as by Professor H. C. Wyld in the third edition of *A Short History of English* (1927) and Dr. Mary S. Serjeantson in *The Review of English Studies*, III, 328, is obtained by inference from Robson's introduction (pp. xli-xlii), where the last-mentioned states that it is possible to "ascertain the period when the parchment book, instead of recounting the wonderful feats of King Arthur and his knights became a record of the squabbles of alewives and tolls upon pigs. This portion occupies eleven folios, and was probably begun by William Irland upon his coming into possession of the estate, which appears to have been at the beginning of the reign of Henry V in 1413." In 1876 the MS. was again examined by the late Sir James A. H. Murray, who saw clearly the unsoundness of the premises on which this dating had been based, but did not, so far as I am aware, publish his conclusions. They are set forth in a letter pasted to the inside of the front board of the MS. I have had recently the privilege of re-examining the MS. most generously lent for some weeks to Leeds University Library by Major Ireland Blackburne, who has allowed a photographic

<sup>1</sup> N.E.D. adopts the date c. 1420.

record to be made of the three romances and deposited in the Library.

The MS. is bound in stout boards of oak smoothed by the adze; the upper board is rather badly wormed. The sheets are sewn on leather thongs which are passed through the boards and firmly secured by small wooden wedges. Remains of headbands show that the MS. had originally a leather back of which slight traces only survive. The rude character of the binding makes it difficult to assign even an approximate date.

The MS. is written on parchment of fair quality with broad margins to the page, which, when intact, measures approximately  $10\frac{4}{5}$  by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches. If one disregard the stubs of an earlier gathering visible at the front hinge, it is made up of two sets of gatherings, the second of which is separately paged.

The three romances are contained in the first set, which is made up of five gatherings, each originally of six sheets or twelve folios. There are 21-26 lines to the page—not 21-24, as Robson states. There is neither illuminated nor elaborate capital, though, as can be seen from Robson's facsimiles, a space of two or three lines' depth has been left at the beginning of poems or fittes. F. 16, which contained the first four stanzas (vv. 1-48) of "Sir Amadace" and may exceptionally have had a coloured initial, has been cut out; and at times the margin at fore-edge or foot of the page has been shorn off close to the text. Thus the signature 'A' at the end of the first gathering (f. 12*b*) has been lost. The extant signatures are placed as follows at the beginning and end of gatherings:—

II: B-----C  
 III: D-----E  
 IV: ff-----G  
 V: h-----

"The Anturs of Arther" ends at the bottom of f. 15*b*, "Sir Amadace" four lines from the top of f. 34*b*, "The Avowynge of K. Arther" halfway down f. 59*a*; and the original scribe has left the rest of f. 59 and the whole of f. 60 blank. While the MS. was in the custody of Sir James Murray it was submitted to Sir

Edward Bond and Sir E. Maunde Thompson, who dated the hand in which the romances are written as "late Henry VI, not before 1450," and Dr. Eric Millar, who has kindly examined photographs for me, sees no reason to question their dating. The signatures show that these five gatherings, apart from the losses specified above, are complete in themselves, and the worn condition of the outermost leaves (ff. 1 and 60) suggests that they originally formed a separate fascicule. The bulk of the inscription on f. 60a

" In tempore Henerici quarti [qui inauguravit  
1309] Regis Anglie &c. recordat'."

is in a hand not earlier than the end of the sixteenth century, and the part I have placed in brackets is much later still.

If, as the hands suggest, the "Thomas yrlonde" whose name is to be seen in the bottom margin of f. 48a, the "Tomas yrlond" whose name is written in the top margin of p. 68 in the eighth gathering and the Thomas Ireland who succeeded to the estate of Hale in 1525 at the age of 22 and died in 1545 (*V.C.H. Lancashire*, III, 146) be one and the same person, the two sets of gatherings were already associated in the first part of the sixteenth century. The second set contains two of seven sheets and one of six, making 80 pages in all. It has been suggested that one or more gatherings have been lost after p. 56 and p. 80. If so, they must have been detached at an early date; for there is no trace of stubs in the binding, and the last three leaves have suffered severely from damp, apparently before they were placed within the present boards. The pages are numbered from 1 to 80 in a fairly early hand; a still earlier hand has foliated ff. 1-18; and the signatures 'A' and 'B' are found at the end of the first and the beginning of the second gathering. These three gatherings contain memoranda and records<sup>2</sup> of the manor of Hale, pp. 9-80 (in which the latest year mentioned is 14 Henry VI) being in a decidedly earlier hand than pp. 1-8 (in which the latest year mentioned is 4

<sup>2</sup> Certain of these are printed by Robson in his description of the manuscript (pp. xxxvii—xliii).

Edward IV). Robson believed that the records for 1413-1416 were "entered about the period of their respective dates." My colleague Professor Hamilton Thompson, who has been kind enough to examine this part of the MS, would assign the first eight pages to c. 1470 and the remaining seventy-two to c. 1440.

The date c. 1400-1413 often assigned to the text of the romances of the Ireland MS. is based on the assumption that the eight gatherings formed from the outset a single unit, which was used for memoranda and records of the manor of Hale after the first 58½ folios had been occupied by the romances; that, moreover, the records for 1413-1416 were contemporary entries. But even if this last assumption were proved correct the date of the romances would not be established as c. 1400-1413. Robson did not examine the MS. from a bibliographical point of view and failed to notice that it is a composite affair. The romances bear an independent set of signatures, the position of 'h' (in the top left hand margin of f. 49a) showing clearly that it must have been written before the MS. was bound at all. The series is not continued at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth gathering, which on the contrary initiates (at the foot of p. 28) a new series not carried beyond 'B' (in the top margin of p. 29). A further argument is the worn condition of ff. 1 and 60, which suggests that the five gatherings of which they form the outermost leaves were in existence as a separate entity for an appreciable time before they were bound with the gatherings which contain memoranda and records of the manor of Hale. Moreover the palæographical evidence points to c. 1450-1460 rather than to c. 1400-1413. The orthography is West Midland and the romances may have been copied at Hale itself, perhaps for John de Ireland who held the manor from 1435-1462 (*V.C.H. Lancashire*, III, 145). The rhymes make it improbable that any one of the romances was originally composed on Merseyside. I do not wish, however, to anticipate the conclusions of my old pupil Dr. A. G. Hooper, who, under the direction of Professor Robert J. Menner of Yale University, is working on all

four texts of "The Anturs of Arther," or of other Leeds graduates who are preparing to re-edit "Sir Amadace" and "The Avowyng of King Arther."

BRUCE DICKINS.

#### MIDDLE ENGLISH 'WORD AND ENDE.'

A common Middle English formula is *ord and ende*; this descends from Old English, but a variant *word and ende* also occurs frequently (see C. T. Onions, *Modern Language Review* xxiv, 389 ff.). In Middle English *word* doubtless represents an alteration of the original *ord*; see Onions, *loc. cit.*, p. 393. In Old Swedish, however, a phrase *orþ ok ænde* is recorded with the meaning 'from beginning to end' (see K. F. Söderwall, *Ordbok öfver Svenska Medeltids-Språket*, s.v. *orþ*) and this corresponds exactly to ME. *word and ende*, as *orþ* (with characteristic Scandinavian loss of *w* before a rounded vowel; see J. Brøndum-Nielsen, *Gammeldansk Grammatik*, § 264) = ME. *word* and *ænde* = ME. *ende*.

E.S.O.