Leeds Studies in English

NOTES ON ATHELSTON.

The following editions of *Athelston* are referred to in these notes: *Die Romanze von Athelston*, ed. J. Zupitza, in *Englische Studien* xiii and xiv (1889, 1890).

Middle English Metrical Romances, pp. 179-205, ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale, New York, 1930.

Athelston, ed. A. McI. Trounce, Oxford University Press, 1933.

(Sisam is quoted from *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*).

11 *wolden*: Z. emends to *wilen*, and similarly in v. 14; FH. retain *wolden*, and so does T. The emendation to *wilen* in v. 11 is to be preferred: cf. the opening of *The Eremyte and the Outelawe* (*Englische Studien* xiv, 165):

> *Off tweye brethyrn y may you tell,*
> *By olde tyme how hyt befelle,*
> *Whylom, by olde sawe.*

To assume that the messengers were foreigners, as does T., only leads to further difficulties: Athelston was the King's cousin.

In v. 14 it is better to retain *wolden* with the meaning ' were wont.' The scribe in all probability substituted *wolden* for *wilen* in v. 11 because his eye caught *wolden* in the similar v. 14, just as in v. 12 he substituted *kynde* for *kynne*, which his eye caught from v. 15.

30 *ney3yd hym nere*: FH. ' was closely related,' followed by T. with the comment ' an unusual meaning for the phrase.' The usual meaning of the verb ' to approach ' gives sound sense. Athelston, being the King's cousin, considered it advantageous to be about the Court, and his expectation was realised as we see in the vv. following, where he succeeds his cousin. *Þerfore* means ' on that account.'

79 *Wymound*. T. says at page 28 ' It looks as if we are entitled to say that Wymound was regarded as a generic term for the traitor, the villain, the rascal.' In *Horn Childe, Wigard* and *Wikel* (gen. *Wigles*) are the traitors:

> *Wicaŕd and his broþer Wikel,*
> *Seþen Horn fond hem ful fikel,*
> *Lesinges on him þai liȝt.* (34-6.)

In v. 478 the form *Wigard* occurs. These names were doubtless associated with such words as M.E. *wiȝel*, 'deceit,' M.E. *wicke*, 'wicked,' M.E. *wik-hals*, 'rogue.'

82 *for here sake:* FH. 'for their ruin,' which T. quotes without comment. Translate ' on their account ': cf. *for þe cuntas sake* in v. 208.

87 *þorwȝ wurd oure werk may sprynge.* the meaning is ' Through words (*False lesyngys* 83) our proposed action (*To don hem brenne and sloo* 84) may well originate.' *Wurd* and *werk* appear frequently together (as in Carleton Brown's *Religious Lyrics of the* 14*th Century*):

> *When sunne shal boen souht*
> *In werk in word in þouht.* (16, 40-1).
> *Forȝeue me þat I haf greuyd þe*
> *Wyth wurd, worke, wyl, and thouȝt.* (94, 19-20).

There is no need to transpose *wurd* and *werk*, as T. suggests.

124 MS. *a swete tydande* (*a* written above the line): T. suggests that ' It is possible that the *a* had displaced a *u* from which the stroke on top has been missed. A *u* could easily be mistaken for an open *a*, and *unswete* would give the sense required.' His suggestion that *unswete* is the original word is seen to be all the more likely if we assume rather that the stroke on top of the *u* was not missed, but closed up the *u* making it resemble an *a*.

142 MS. *deposen*: T. retains.; FH. also retain, but in v. 166 emend *poysoun* to *deposen*. Z's emendation *poysoun þe* is to be preferred. Obviously v. 142 amplifies the preceding verse, and renders the meaning of the following one clear (*slyly, sodaynly*), and vv. 166-7 clinch the matter.

165 *And þus he begynnes here trayne.* T. in his Glossary gives ' trayne *n*. stratagem.' It is however most likely the verb, as Z. suggests, with *begynnes* as auxiliary, ' And thus he does lead her astray ' Otherwise, one would expect *hys trayne*:

one can hardly take *here* to mean ' their,' when the Earl's wife
is not a party to the scheme in the first place.

266   The explanation of the break at 266 is that the scribe
was beginning a new page.   At 447 the rhyme of the couplet is
the same as that of the tail 449, and the scribe, after writing
parlement, may in error, have returned to his original at 449
(omitting certain lines) his eye having caught *schent*, which he
associated with *parlement* as a couplet.

281   *Abyyd ful dere þou schalle*:   Z. notes this early example
of the confusion of M.E. *abye*, ' to pay for,' and M.E. *abyde*, ' to
abide.'

Cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, III, 2, 175, *Lest to thy peril
thou aby it dear*, and III, 2, 335, *Thou shalt aby it*, where 1st
Quarto *aby* becomes *abide* in the Folios.   *Julius Caesar* III, 1,
92 ff. provides an interesting bit of word-play based on the two
meanings of *abide*, ' to stay ' and ' to pay for ':

Cassius.   And leave us, Publius, lest that the people,
            Rushing on us, should do your age some mischief.
Brutus.   Do so:— and let no man abide this deed,
            But we the doers.

335   *Charynge-Cros*:   this was erected by King Edward I,
being completed in 1296.   This version of *Athelston* must have
been composed after that date.

346   *Þe Blee*: Sweet's *Oldest English Texts* has in Charter
28/5 of Æðelberht 852, *to blean ðem wiada*, and in Charter 53/6
of Cœnwulf 814, *on blean*; cf. E. Ekwall, *Studies on English
Place- and Personal Names*, pp. 60-62, J. K. Wallenberg,
Kentish Place-Names, pp. 63-64, 357-8, and *The Place-Names
of Kent*, p. 491.

Of the remaining Kentish place-names 40 &c. *Douere* (*KPN.*
22), 115, 188 *Stane*, 342 *Stone* (*KPN.* 304, *PNK.* 48-49), 342
Steppyngebourne, 346 *Osprynge* (*KPN.* 148, *PNK.* 289-90),
751 *Grauysende* (*PNK.* 100), only *Steppyngebourne* needs
comment.   Wallenberg cites no similar form under Sitting-
bourne (*PNK.* 264-5), but cf. the Chaucerian *Bobbe-up-and-
doun* for *Harbledown* at *CT.* G. 2.

407 *Into Westemynstyr so ly3t*: Z. says '*ly3t* must here be an adverb,' but does not say what meaning he attaches to it. T. has 'nimbly,' 'in haste.' *so ly3t* is probably a tag meaning 'so bright,' and referring to Westminster in the morning light. Cf. Sir Orfeo 369 ff:

Al þat lond was euer li3t,   For when it schuld be þerk and ni3t,
þe riche stones li3t gonne,   As bri3t as doþ at none þe sonne.

Similar instances of conventional usage are

þe countesse so clere 117, *þe qwene so cleer* 361, *with gold so clere* 36.

429 *prayer*: T. says 'The abbreviation mark here placed above the *p* seems to be merely a conventional sign., I have written *ra* because of the *ra* spellings in *prayer* in the rest of the poem. It is not the sign for *re* which is used in *presoun* 708, 720.' The abbreviation mark is for *ra*: cf. *gras* 58.

456 MS. *He swoor be oþis sunne and mone*: Z. transposes to *oþis be*, T. follows. Cf. *I swere boþe be book and belle* 681, *And sworen boþe be book and belle* 792. V. 456 may have been originally *He swoor boþe be sunne and mone*, the scribe having reproduced *boþe* as *be oþis* (suggested by *swoor*), and omitted the following *be*.

483-94 T. says 'There is an unusual repetition of the same rhymes in this stanza. The tail-rhymes could be accounted for by the absence of fitting rhymes, but the repetition of *lond* points either to carelessness or tampering.' The repetition of *lond, hond, sorwe, borwe*, is a stylistic merit here; it hammers out effectively the Bishop's threats. 'Tampering' is hardly likely when 'in both metre and expression the stanza is a good one.' Repetition of a word in the tail-rhymes occurs elsewhere in *Athelston*, stanzas 26, 40, 43, 56, 74; the repeated words are never consecutive rhymes.

546 The topography of *Athelston* is against T's. identification of *þe brokene cros* with the Stone Cross in Cheap. Vv. 336-7 make it quite clear that vv. 498-9 refer to Fleet Street, and not to a place further east. It is clear from vv. 498-9 that the Bishop met the Lords immediately (an Archbishop deprived of his insignia would not go far in a city without exciting attention).

At p. 37, T. does not distinguish between the Old Cross in
Cheap and Paul's Cross in St. Paul's Churchyard.   The latter
was the meeting place of the Folk-moot, and Paul's Cross was
the scene of many incidents in the life of London.   The Henry
III episode referred to by T., occurred at Paul's Cross (*Stow's
Survey*, ed. Morley, p. 312).   Stow also mentions the reading of
a Papal Bull by the same king at the cross in 1262, and the
Dean of Paul's cursing at this cross those who had broken into
St. Martin's Church.

Jousting was held further east than the Old Cross, ' betwixt
Sopar's Lane and the great cross (the Eleanor Cross)'; see Stow,
p. 262 and p. 260.   When T. says on p. 37 ' Seeing thus that St.
Paul's was the recognized centre of opposition to the king, one
can appreciate the fitness of having the scene of the king's
humiliation and the triumph of the Church just outside St.
Paul's ' one cannot agree; the likeliest place would have been
Paul's Cross.

The Bishop turns back in Fleet Street (498) and goes towards
Westminster to meet the King (544), we must therefore look for
the broken cross between Fleet Street and Westminster.   Z.
says: ' Probably Chester-cross is meant, which was situated in
the Strand, in the neighbourhood of the present Somerset
House.'   He quotes Stow, p. 400:

' In the High Street, near unto the Strand, sometime stood a
cross of stone against the Bishop of Coventry or Chester his
house, whereof I read that in the year 1294, and divers other
times, the justices itinerants sate without London, at the stone
cross over against the Bishop of Coventry's house, and some-
time they sate in the Bishop's house, which was hard by the
Strand, as is aforesaid.'

On p. 399, Stow tracing the bounds of the ' liberty pertaining
to the Duchy of Lancaster ' says: ' and again on the north side,
or right hand, some small distance without Temple Bar, in the
high street, from a pair of stocks there standing, stretcheth one
large middle row, or troop of small tenements, partly opening
to the south, partly towards the north, up west to a stone cross,

now headless, over against the Strand, and this is the bounds of that liberty which sometime belonged to Brian Lisle, since to Peter of Savoy, and then to the house of Lancaster.'

This boundary cross would be a fitting place for the Bishop to wait for the King; it marked the bounds of Westminster. No doubt the poet used the description *þe brokene cros off ston* to distinguish between this cross and *Charynge-cros*, further west along the route to Westminster, and mentioned by him in v. 335.

638 *And siþþen it ffel at syȝt*: Z. has ' It came to pass that she sighed.' He makes no comment beyond this. *at* may be the Northern conj. from ON. *at*, still common in dialect, but this omission of the pronoun is not paralleled in *Athelston*, and there is no other example of *at*. Stanza 60 is incomplete: the three lines may have been dropped after 632 (see 582-3, and 600-2), or after 638. Perhaps the scribe mistook *syȝt* ' sighed ' for *syȝt* ' sight,' and the line may have read originally *And siþþen it ffel sche syȝt*. It is possible that *at syȝt* may mean ' at sight'; cf. *I see toppys of hyllys he, many at a syght . . .* (Sisam xvii, 469). V. 638 would then mean ' And afterwards it happened before their eyes . . .,' what happened being related in three following lines, completing the stanza.

T. says ' I can make nothing of this line. I cannot believe that Z. is right when he says . . .'

645 *here-away to drawe*: *here-away* is most likely a compound; ' to move away from there.,' cf. *hereoff* 543.

683 *þe ryȝt doom*: ' the right judgement.' The full emphasis is on *þyselff* in the next line, and this is lost if *þe* is taken as the pronoun—which is Trounce's interpretation. Clearly *ryȝt* is the word to stress and not *þe*.

698 *hors ffyue*: T. says ' Why the numbers ? . . . fyue . . . is nothing more than a popular number as a rhyme-word. The legal " drawing " was by *one* horse.' Yet in his note to 804 on the execution of William Wallace, he quotes from *Flores Historiarum*: ' *Primo per plateas Londoniae ad caudas equinas tractus . . .'*

L. F. Salzmàn in *English Trade in the Middle Ages* says at p.
204: ' When Thomas Becket went to Paris in 1158, as Chan-
cellor and Ambassador of Henry II, it is true that twelve well-
appointed pack-horses formed part of his imposing Cavalcade,
but there were also " eight splendid chariots, each drawn by five
horses no less strong and shapely than war-horses." '   In the
footnote to that page, Salzman says:

' Five horses seem to have been a common number for a
team, e.g. in 1413 when John Hardyman, the drunken servant of
Drew Barentyn, merchant of London, so beat the horses that he
was driving that they upset the cart and killed him, we are told
that the first horse was worth 6/8d., the second 6s., " this horse
is blind and has le Ryngboon in two legs," the third 8s., " it
is purblind and has le Spaveyn in two legs," the fourth 13/4d.,
the fifth 15s.'

705 Z. has *Sere.*; the MS. has clearly *Sey*.   T. has Zupitza's
incorrect reading., FH. have the correct reading but do not note
the variation in their footnotes.   Translate ' Say " Egelan and
his sons are slain, both hanged and drawn (=Do as I instruct
thee); the Countess is thrown into prison . . ." '

730   *lende*: in his Glossary, T. has ' lende *v. inf.* remain.,
lende *imper. sg.* give 730.'   The latter is in origin the same verb
as *lene* 4, *lent* 452, from OE. *lǽnan*, the *d* being introduced from
past tense and past. part. due to analogy with such verbs as
sende (see *NED*).

776 MS. *in dede*: T. in his note to 765 ff. says ' I think there
is a case for placing 768-70 before 765-7.   There is something
wrong with the transmission at this point, for, according to the
rhymes, we have a nine line section followed by one of fifteen
lines.'

Z. substitutes the tag *wiþ alle* for MS. *in dede*, thus making
two normal stanzas, 72 and 73, of twelve lines each.   On this
T. remarks in his note to 776: ' Although, as I have maintained
in the Intro. 9, I do not think such emendation worth while, I
adopt his suggestion here because it is convenient for the text,
and is a pleasant example of his unfailing ingenuity.'   FH.
retain the MS. reading *in dede*.

Z. is undoubtedly right in his emendation as an examination of rhyme-linkings in the margin of the MS. shows.

The scribe overlooked *alle* 767 (which he should have linked with *halle* 770), linked *halle* 770 with *befalle* 773, began a new page with line 775, and glancing forward at the tails, took it that *wiþ alle* 776 (which his oversight had now left on his hands with no rhyme to link with) should go with *rede* 779. He substituted *in dede* and solved his problem. When he came to the three tails *glede* 782 *spede* 785 and *lede* 788, he linked the two outer ones. The result was a nine-line stanza followed by a fifteen-line stanza. Zupitza's emendation was made without any consideration of the MS. linkings, which makes his suggestion all the more pleasing as an ' example of his unfailing ingenuity.'

Apart from this, the text is sound, and T's suggested transposition is unnecessary; after Wymound's public denial of guilt, the Bishop took him aside with the intention no doubt of urging a confession. The King, seeing that nothing was coming of it, then said ' Let him to the fire go to find out the truth.'

805 *þe Elmes*: T. says in his note to 804-5 ' We are safe in concluding that *þe Elmes* in *Athelston* means Tyburn.' Z. quotes Stow (p. 350 in Morley's edition): ' Then is Smithfield Pond, which of old time in records was called Horse Pool, for that men water horses there, and was a great water. In the 6th of Henry V, a new building was made in this west part of Smithfield betwixt the said pool and the river of the Wells, or Turnmill Brook, in a place then called the Elms, for that there grew many elm-trees., and this had been the place of execution for offenders. Since the which time the building there hath been so increased that now remaineth not one tree growing.'

The *Enc. Brit.* 14th ed. 1929, under *Tyburn*, has:

' The name is more famous in its application to the Middlesex gallows also called Tyburn Tree and Deadly Never Green, and also at an early period, the Elms, through confusion with the place of execution of that name at Smithfield . . . . The site, however, may have varied, for Tyburn was a place of execution as early as the end of the 12th century.'

Both Tyburn and Smithfield were scenes of execution long after the 14th century, and the safest conclusion with regard to *Athelston* is that the Elms may have been at Smithfield or Tyburn.

808 *þat durste ffelle hys ffalse body*: Z. misses the meaning of this line: he says ' *felle* equals *fele* and indeed, so far as I am aware, is not otherwise authenticated with the meaning " bury," for the English area: cf. Goth. *filhan*.' The word is clearly the causative of *fallen*, ' to cause to fall,' ' to bring down '; the following lines contain an exact parallel:

He said: " *lord, if it be þi will,   In þis stede lat me hing still,*

Þat none haue power me to fell   Doun of þis cros þat I on dwell,'
(C. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*: *Neue Folge*, p. 7, vv. 233-6 — Heilbronn 1881).

The Verse. At p. 53 T. says: ' Of the seventy-five stanzas of *Athelston* fifty-three show no variation from the scheme *aab ccd ddb eeb.*

. . . Stanzas 35, 50, 51, have only four rhymes . . .' Further down he says: ' Some poems like *Emaré* seem to mix the four-rhyme stanza or the five-rhyme arbitrarily, and in others, like *Athelston*, we may suppose that the presence of four-rhyme stanzas (i.e. *aab aab ccb ddb*) is due to the accidental, or even careless, use of the same rhyme twice, or to bad transmission.' The rhyme-scheme of stanza 51 is however, *aab ccb ddb ddb*, furthermore stanza 39 *aab ccb ccb ddb*, and stanzas 65 and 70 *aab ccb ddb aab*, are four-rhyme, reducing Trounce's total of fifty-three stanzas with normal rhyme-scheme by three.

Collation.

MS.	Z.	FH.	T.
457 scholē	scholen	scholen	schole
478 scholē	scholen	schole	schole
486 wende	wende	wende	wenden[1]

[1] T. has footnote to 486: ' wende Z, *missing abbreviation*.' The mark over the final *e* of *wende* is a spot (there are several in both text and margin) quite unlike the abbreviation bar.

Otherwise T. does not record in his footnotes the variations from Z.'s text tabulated in the fourth column.

Collation.

MS.	Z.	FH.	T.
510 Þanne	Þanne	Þanne	Þan
525 scholē	scholen	scholen	schole
565 þe	þe	þe	be
590 hys	hys	**Hys**	his
705 Sey	Ser*e*	**Sey**	Sere
738 myn	myn	**myn**	my
753 messang*er*	messang*er*	messanger	messenger
754 seþþyn	seþþyn	seþþyn	seþþen

GEORGE TAYLOR.