

***Robin Hood  
and  
Other Outlaw Tales***

*Edited by*  
***Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren***

*with contributions by*  
***Thomas E. Kelly***  
***Russell A. Peck***  
***Michael Swanton***  
***Paul Whitfield White***

Published for TEAMS  
(The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages)  
in Association with the University of Rochester

by

Medieval Institute Publications

---

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Kalamazoo, Michigan — 2000

### *The Death of Robin Hood*

- “For there shall noe man with me goe,  
Nor man with mee ryde,  
And Little John shall be my man,  
30 And beare my benbow by my side.” *long bow*
- “You’st beare your bowe, master, your selfe,  
And shoote for a penny with mee.” *you must*  
“To that I doe assent,” Robin Hood sayd,  
“And soe, John, lett it bee.”
- 35 They two bolde children shotten together, *young men*  
All day their selfe in ranke, *order*  
Until they came to blacke water,  
And over it laid a planke. *was lying*
- 40 Upon it there kneeled an old woman,  
Was banning Robin Hoode; *lamenting*  
“Why dost thou bann Robin Hoode?” said Robin,  
“Knowst thou of him no good?”
- 45 “We women have no benison  
To give to Robin Hoode;  
Wee weepen for his deare body,  
That this day must be lett bloode.” *blessing*
- 50 “The dame prior is my aunts daughter,  
And nie unto my kinne;  
I know shee wold me noe harme this day,  
For all the world to winne.” *wishes me no harm*
- Forth then shotten these children two,  
And they did never lin, *went; young men*  
Until they came to merry Churchlees,  
To merry Churchlees with-in. *stop*
- 55 And when they came to merry Churchlees,  
They knoced upon a pin; *knocked; door-latch*  
Upp then rose dame prioresse,  
And lett good Robin in.

*Later Ballads*

- Then Robin gave to dame prioresse  
Twenty pound in gold,  
And bad her spend while that wold last,  
And shee shold have more when shee wold.
- 60 *desired it*
- And downe then came dame prioresse,  
Downe she came in that ilke,  
With a pair of blood-irons in her hands,  
Were wrapped all in silke.
- 65 *that same [place]  
surgical knives*
- "Sett a chaffing-dish to the fyer," said dame prioresse,  
"And stripp thou up thy sleeve."  
I hold him but an unwise man  
That will noe warning leeve.
- 70 *believe*
- She laid the blood-irons to Robin Hoods vaine,  
Alacke, the more pitye!  
And pearct the vaine, and let out the bloode,  
That full red was to see.
- 75 *pierced*
- And first it bled, the thicke, thicke bloode,  
And afterwards the thinne,  
And well then wist good Robin Hoode,  
Treason there was within.
- 80 *knew*
- He then bethought him of a casement there,  
Thinking for to get down,  
But was so weak he could not leap,  
He could not get him down.
- 85 *mouth*
- He then bethought him of his bugle-horn,  
Which hung low down to his knee;  
He set his horn unto his mouth,  
And blew out weak blasts three.
- 90
- Then Little John, when hearing him,  
As he sat under a tree:  
"I fear my master is now near dead,  
He blows so wearily."

## *The Death of Robin Hood*

Then Little John to fair Kirkly is gone,  
As fast as he can dree;  
But when he came to Kirkly-hall,  
He broke locks two or three.

go

95     “What cheere my master?” said Little John;  
“In faith, John, little goode.  
My cousin and Red Roger,  
Between them let my blood.”

100    “I have upon a gowne of greene,  
Is cut short by my knee,  
And in my hand a bright browne brand  
That will well bite for thee.”

sword

105    But before then of a shot-windowe  
Good Robin Hood he could glide,  
Red Roger, with a grounden glave,  
Thrust him through the milke-white side.

a shuttered window

sharpened sword

110    But Robin was light and nimble of foote,  
And thought to abate his pride,  
For betwixt his head and his shoulders  
He made a wound full wide.

Says, “Ly there, ly there, Red Roger,  
The doggs they must thee eate;  
For I may have my houzle,” he said,  
“For I may both goe and speake.”

last rites

115    “Now give me mood,” Robin said to Little John,  
“Give me mood with thy hand;  
I trust to God in heaven soe hye  
My houzle will me bestand.”

courage (see note)

confession; assist

120    “Now give me leave, give me leave, master,” he said,  
“For Christs love give leave to me,  
To set a fier within this hall,  
And to burne up all Churchlee.”

### *Later Ballads*

- “That I reade not,” said Robin Hoode then,  
“Little John, for it may not be;  
If I shold doe any widow hurt, at my latter end,  
God,” he said, “wold blame me.
- “I never hurt fair maid in all my time,  
Nor at mine end shall it be,  
But give me my bent bow in my hand,  
And a broad arrow I'll let flee;  
And where this arrow is taken up,  
There shall my grave digged be.
- “Lay me a green sod under my head,  
And another at my feet;  
And lay my bent bow by my side,  
Which was my music sweet;  
And make my grave of gravel and green,  
Which is most right and meet.
- “Let me have length and breadth enough,  
With a green sod under my head;  
That they may say, when I am dead  
Here lies bold Robin Hood.”
- These words they readily granted him,  
Which did bold Robin please:  
And there they buried bold Robin Hood,  
Within the fair Kirkleys.



## **Notes**

- 1 This text is constructed from Percy's folio and, where the folio pages are torn, the 1786 *English Archer* version, as follows: Percy, lines 11–78, 95–126; *English Archer*, lines 1–10, 79–94, 127–46; editorial linking is provided in lines 42–43 and 97–98.
- 3 Broom is fairly often invoked in the refrains to lyrics and ballads. The flower that provided the badge of the Plantagenet kings, broom (genet) was thought to have special powers and seems to have been connected with springtime and magic.
- 5 Robin and John shoot for a wager in several early texts, such as *Robin Hood and the Monk* and *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*.
- 6 *Hey, etc.* A nonsense refrain akin to line 2, to be sung at the end of each stanza. Compare *Hey nonny nonny* of “A lover and his lass” in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. The refrains would bring each stanza to six lines.
- 8 The text reads *fly*, but Child emends to *flee* on the grounds of rhyme. (See line 130 where the form also appears.) Though the next issue of the garland corrects to *flee* the change is not necessary in the light of the many partial rhymes found in the less literary of the ballads.
- 13 The adjective *merry* seems odd for a priory, especially when it will be the location of a tragedy. The term is repeated in lines 53–55. The garland version merely calls the place *fair Kirklees*.
- 19 The MS reads *there is a good yeoman*, but this is clearly an error and *is* should be omitted, as it is by Child. The reference is presumably to Roger, who is involved with the Prioress as Robin’s enemy in this and other versions of the story. There is a resemblance in the language to the presentation of Guy of Gisborne in the earlier ballad.

### *Later Ballads*

- 26 There is a reminiscence here, and in line 31, of the way in which Robin quarrels with his followers to his own disadvantage in *Robin Hood and the Monk* and, it seems, in *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*. In the Percy version Little John seems to go with him nevertheless, but in the garland version Robin goes alone (without the preceding argument), and John hurries to help Robin when he hears his horn.
- 26–27 Child prints a row of asterisks here as if there is a gap in the text, but none appears in the Percy folio, and none seems implied in the dialogue and action; Dobson and Taylor do not indicate a break here. See the similar instance in *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*, lines 6–7.
- 32 The MS reads *Nor shoote for a peny*. *Nor* is presumably a scribal error picked up from the beginning of line 28, and needs emending to *And*.
- 38 It sounds as if the outlaws laid a plank over the water, but *laid* means “was lying.”
- 40 Commentators translate *banning* as “cursing”; this does not make sense. There is an earlier sense of *bann* as “call on” as in the marriage banns; line 45 makes it clear that the women are prescient of Robin’s ending, and that the meaning of *banning* cannot be “curse,” but “lament.”
- 42–43 These lines are ripped out in Percy and are reconstructed as here.
- 69–70 The narrator’s direct evaluative comment is unusual in a ballad.
- 97 Red Roger is presumably related to *Syr Roger of Donkesley* or *Donkestere*, who is involved in Robin’s death in the *Gest* (lines 1806 and 1817).
- 97–98 The two versions of the ballad do not join neatly here. Lines 96–97 are provided editorially as Robin’s answer to John, and the next stanza appears to be John’s response, but see line 102.
- 99 This line is in Percy’s hand in the manuscript, and is presumably a piece of editorial linking written by him.
- 102 The MS reads *bite of thee*, but if the speaker is John, then emendation to *for* is needed. It may be that preceding material has been lost which means Robin

### *The Death of Robin Hood*

speaks these lines in a threatening way to Roger. But with what text is available, the emendation is necessary to make sense.

- 103 The MS also has *forth then* as if Robin actually escapes, and Child prints this, but it is, from the following action, an impossible reading; to emend to *But before then of*, meaning "But before then from," makes sense.

The MS reads *shop-windowe* which must be a scribal error for *shot-windowe*. The action is obscure here; it seems that Robin, with John's help, is escaping, but Roger catches him at the window and stabs him; Robin is able to kill Roger. Robin knows he is badly wounded, but unlike Roger, who has died unabsolved, he will be able to receive his *houzle* before death.

- 105 The MS reads *grounding glave*, presumably an error for *grounden*, Child's emendation, which is accepted here.

- 115 Dobson and Taylor (1976, p. 136) suggest that *mood* here means "help" or "God" i.e., the sacraments; but this has been referred to in *houzle*, line 113. Child, in a late note (V, 240), feels that an emendation to "Give me my God" is "not perhaps too bold a suggestion." He returns to this still later (V, 297), arguing that communion bread was called "God." This seems unnecessary. The Old English word *mod* means courage, and that is the proper heroic thing to ask for at such a moment from a faithful attendant; this is effectively a secular and heroic redefinition of the Catholic deathbed practices, which a layman could not administer.

- 127 The garland version employs two six-line stanzas here.

- 136 The reference appears to be to placing a harp with a dead person.

- 146 Kirkleys is the only place where Robin is supposed to be buried, which is a little unusual for a hero with such a wide-ranging myth. Presumably this is because the *Gest*, Grafton, and Parker were all specific on this point. An epitaph and even an illustration of the alleged grave were in circulation by the seventeenth century.

## *A True Tale of Robin Hood*

### *Introduction*

Martin Parker, the best known professional ballad writer of the early seventeenth century, produced his lengthy compilation by early 1632. It was entered in the *Stationers' Register* in February; the copy in the Bodleian Library has been thought to have been produced late in 1631. Child printed his text from the copy in the British Library, but the Bodleian copy (here called Bod.) is used here as a base text, being both slightly more accurate (see lines 28, 80, 152, 263, 352, 374, 470) and perhaps an earlier edition. Both these early copies have been cropped for binding in a similar way, and at times the edition of 1686 needs to be consulted, including for some words in the highly elaborate subtitle:

A brief Touch of the life and death of that Renowned Outlaw, Robert Earle of Huntington  
vulgarly called Robbin Hood, who lived and dyed in A.D. 1198, being the 9 yere of the  
reigne of King Richard the first, commonly called Richard Cuer de Lyon.

Carefully collected out of the truest Writers of our English Chronicles. And published for  
the satisfaction of those who desire too see

Truth purged from falsehood.

So scholarship and moralism arrive in what Parker suggests is the otherwise frail and fantastical realm of Robin Hood story. This is more a blurb than a commitment, however, because, as Child wryly points out, in his rejection of "fained tales" Parker uses plenty of the ballad fictions. He clearly is familiar with Grafton, and also is obviously aware of the *Gest* through the "Saint Maries" Abbey connection (line 33). And he follows fully Munday's gentrified representation of the hero (*Lord Robert Hood by name*, line 12). Incidents are drawn from *Robin Hood and the Bishop*, *Robin Hood and Queen Catherin*, Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington*, and probably the ending of *Robin Hood's Fishing*. Child suggested that the fight against the abbot (lines 173–220) and the Bishop of Ely (lines 221–56) came from "some lost broadside" (III, 227), but this Bishop figures in Munday, and the abbot story could easily be an assemblage of similar events.

Child finally remarks that Parker may have chosen his title *A True Tale* as a challenge to the popular proverb "Tales of Robin Hood are good for fools," but it

### *A True Tale of Robin Hood*

is clear from his sub-title and his final words that Parker is specifically associating himself with the popular scholarship that then, as now, sought to identify the real Robin Hood: he ends by quoting — probably composing — the alleged epitaph raised by the Prioress of Kirklees for her dead cousin.

Parker's business was to publish fluent and credible texts of some size on popular subjects of national interest, including King Arthur and St. George. His was, in a sense, the hardback trade parallel to the paperback world of broadsides. His *A True Tale* is in effect a new version of the *Gest*, a major compilation for a serious audience in a new context of readership. The *Gest* was suited to certain fifteenth-century tastes with its episodic narrative, its casual and sometimes humorous moralism, and its sturdy anti-authoritarianism. Parker's text bespeaks new values of biography and historicism, a hero not only named and placed, but also given a developed career with motives for his major deeds. It is also a text that thoroughly embraces central government and sees the old Catholic churchmen as the major enemy; insofar as Robin attacks them he is valued, but as an enemy of the modern state he is to be deplored. The readers are to be delighted that *in these latter dayes / Of civil government there are a hundred wayes / Such outlawes to prevent* (lines 433–36).

None of the humor of the earlier (and later) ballads survives, nor does their concern for the forest and natural values. Robin is worth discussing because he was a *man of fame* (line 10), generous and brave, fiercely anti-clerical — castrating monks and friars was a normal practice of *these sparkes* (lines 65–72). He only shed blood in self defence, and mostly that of the *crewell clergie* (line 274). Not only did he not resist the king seriously, he sued for his favor (via a message on an arrow) and the king would have agreed had not his advisers thought it a bad precedent (line 327). Robin's resistance faded away, as he did himself through the treacherous prioress and a *faithless fryer* (line 365).

Parker's need to negotiate what for his period were the rather complex politics of this outlaw is shown by the fact that some eighty lines follow the death of Robin, as the author works through a whole series of lessons to be drawn in a cautious, conservative way from this account. The events would now be *unpossible* (line 429), and in these days of guns, civil government, and of *plenty, truth and peace* (line 462), we can note the truth of this saga, but also confine it to the past.

Time, change, and politics have, it seems, overtaken the timeless present of the Robin Hood myth as it had been; later periods will take the same historicist viewpoint but re-interpret it in terms of heritage and good times passed. But that will not come directly from Parker's model. His solid, capable, and thoroughly controlled ballad epic — that is the only suitable generic name — was no doubt both too long and too unfanciful to be really popular. It has some unappealingly sheriff-like propensities in its attempt to imprison the outlaw hero in the anti-clerical status of

### *Later Ballads*

its period, and even in the measured confidence of its orderly but somewhat lifeless stanzas. The extra rhyme of the *abab* scheme implies closure and authorial control rather than the more open and rough vigor of the older ballad meter.

Where Munday produced a sprawling dramatic rehash, and Ben Jonson a failed piece of forest fancy, where the later novelists were to find the Robin Hood materials too elusive for their best success, Parker did have the distinction of making a substantial genre fit firmly to the Robin Hood material — though in the process he misplaced the untidy dynamism and the elusive touches of myth that lay, and in some sense still do, behind the many tales, true or not, of Robin Hood.



### *A True Tale of Robin Hood*

Both gentlemen, or yeomen bould,  
Or whatsoever you are,  
To have a stately story tould,  
Attention now prepare.

5      It is a tale of Robbin Hood,  
That I to you will tell,  
Which being rightly understood,  
I know will please you well.

10     This Robbin, so much talked on,  
Was once a man of fame,  
Instiled Earle of Huntington,  
Lord Robert Hood by name.

*Called (Styled)*

15     In courtship and magnificence,  
His carriage won him prayse,  
And greater favour with his prince  
Than any in his dayes.

*bearing*

20     In bounteous liberality  
He too much did excell,  
And loved men of quality  
More than exceeding well.

His great revvunes all he sould  
For wine and costly cheere;  
He kept three hundred bowmen bold,  
He shooting loved so deare.

25     No archer living in his time  
With him might well compare;

*Later Ballads*

He practisid all his youthfull prime  
That exercise most rare.

30 At last, by his profuse expence,  
He had consumd his wealth,  
And being outlawed by his prince,  
In woods he livd by stealth.

35 The abbot of Saint Maries rich,  
To whom he mony ought, *owed*  
His hatred to this earle was such  
That he his downefall wrought. *worked*

40 So being outlawed, as 'tis told,  
He with a crew went forth *gang*  
Of lusty cutters, stout and bold, *swordsmen*  
And robbed in the North.

45 Among the rest, one Little John,  
A yeoman bold and free,  
Who could, if it stood him upon, *was necessary*  
With ease encounter three.

50 One hundred men in all he got,  
With whom the story sayes,  
Three hundred common men durst not  
Hold combate any wayes.

55 They Yorkshire woods frequented much,  
And Lancashire also,  
Wherein their practises were such  
That they wrought mickle woe. *great*

None rich durst travell to and fro,  
Though nere so strongly armd, *never*  
But by these theeves, so strong in show,  
They still were rob'd and harmd.

*A True Tale of Robin Hood*

His chiefest spight to the clergie was,  
That lived in monstrous pride;  
No one of them he would let passe  
60 Along the high-way side,

But first they must to dinner goe,  
And afterwards to shrift;  
Full many a one he served so,  
Thus while he livd by theft.

*confession [of wealth]*

65 No monkes nor fryers he would let goe,  
Without paying their fees;  
If they thought much to be usd so,  
Their stones he made them leese.

*testicles; lose*

70 For such as they the country filld  
With bastards in those dayes;  
Which to prevent, these sparkes did geld  
All that came by their wayes.

*men (gallants); castrate*

75 But Robbin Hood so gentle was,  
And bore so brave a minde,  
If any in distresse did passe,  
To them he was so kinde  
  
80 That he would give and lend to them,  
To helpe them at their neede:  
This made all poore men pray for him,  
And wish he well might speede.

*prosper*

The widdow and the fatherlesse  
He would send meanes unto,  
And those whom famine did oppresse  
Found him a friendly foe.

*money*

85 Nor would he doe a woman wrong,  
But see her safe conveid;  
He would protect with power strong  
All those who crav'd his ayde.

### *Later Ballads*

- 90      The abbot of Saint Maries then,  
Who him undid before,  
Was riding with two hundred men,  
And gold and silver store.
- 95      But Robbin Hood upon him set  
With his courageous sparkes,  
And all the coyne perforce did get,  
Which was twelve thousand markes.*men (gallants)*  
*coin (money)*
- 100     He bound the abbot to a tree,  
And would not let him passe  
Before that to his men and he  
His lordship had sayd masse.
- 105     Which being done, upon his horse  
He set him fast astride,  
And with his face towards his arse  
He forced him to ride.
- 110     His men were faine to be his guide,  
For he rode backward home;  
The abbot, being thus vilified,  
Did sorely chafe and fume.*eager*
- 115     Thus Robbin Hood did vindicate  
His former wrongs receavd;  
For twas this covetous prelate  
That him of land bereavd.
- 120     The abbot he rode to the king  
With all the haste he could,  
And to his Grace he every thing  
Exactly did unfold.
- 120     And sayd if that no course were tane,  
By force or statagem,  
To take this rebell and his traine,  
No man shoule passe for them.*taken*

*A True Tale of Robin Hood*

The king protested by and by  
Unto the abbot then  
That Robbin Hood with speed should dye,  
With all his merry men.

- 125 But ere the king did any send,  
He did another feate,  
Which did his Grace much more offend;  
The fact indeed was great. *deed*
- 130 For in a short time after that,  
The kings receivers went  
Towards London with the coyne they got,  
For's Highnesse northerne rent. *For his*
- 135 Bold Robbin Hood and Little John,  
With the rest of their traine, *following*  
Not dreading law, set them upon,  
And did their gold obtaine.
- 140 The king much moved at the same,  
And the abbots talke also,  
In this his anger did proclaime,  
And sent word to and fro,
- That whosoere, alive or dead,  
Could bring him Robbin Hood,  
Should have one thousand markes, well payd  
In gold and silver good.
- 145 This promise of the king did make  
Full many yeomen bold  
Attempt stout Robbin Hood to take,  
With all the force they could.
- 150 But still when any came to him,  
Within the gay greene wood,  
He entertainment gave to them,  
With venson fat and good.

*Later Ballads*

- And shewd to them such martiall sport,  
With his long bow and arrow,  
155 That they of him did give report,  
How that it was great sorow,
- That such a worthy man as he  
Should thus be put to shift,  
Being late a lord of high degree,  
160 Of living quite bereft. *in difficulties*
- The king, to take him, more and more  
Sent men of mickle might:  
But he and his still beate them sore,  
And conquered them in fight. *great strength*
- 165 Or else, with love and courtesie,  
To him he won their hearts:  
Thus still he lived by robbery,  
Throughout the northerne parts.
- And all the country stood in dread  
170 Of Robbin Hood and's men;  
For stouter lads nere livd by bread,  
In those dayes nor since then. *and his  
never*
- The abbot which before I nam'd  
Sought all the meanes he could  
175 To have by force this rebell tane,  
And his adherents bold.
- Therefore he armd five hundred men,  
With furniture compleate,  
But the outlawes slew halfe of them,  
180 And made the rest retreat. *equipment*
- The long bow and the arrow keene  
They were so usd unto  
That still they kept the forest greene,  
In spight o'th' proudest foe.

*A True Tale of Robin Hood*

- 185    Twelve of the abbots men he tooke,  
Who came him to have tane;  
When all the rest the field forsooke,  
These he did entertaine  
            *taken (seized)*
- 190    With banqueting and merriment,  
And, having usd them well,  
He to their lord them safely sent,  
And willd them him to tell  
            That if he would be please at last  
To beg of our good king  
195    That he might pardon what was past,  
And him to favour bring,  
            He would surrender backe agen  
The money which before  
Was taken by him and his men,  
200    From him and many more.  
            Poore men might safely passe by him,  
And some that way would chuse,  
For well they knew that to helpe them  
He evermore did use.
- 205    But where he knew a miser rich,  
That did the poore oppresse,  
To feele his coyne his hand did itch;  
Hee'de have it, more or lesse.
- 210    And sometimes, when the high-way fayld,  
Then he his courage rouses;  
He and his men have oft assayld  
Such rich men in their houses.
- 215    So that, through dread of Robbin then  
And his adventurous crew,  
The mizers kept great store of men,  
Which else maintaynd but few.

### *Later Ballads*

- King Richard, of that name the first,  
Sirnamed Cuer de Lyon, *Lionheart*  
Went to defeate the Pagans curst,  
Who kept the coasts of Syon. *Zion (Palestine)*
- 220      The Bishop of Ely, chancelor,  
Was left as vice-roy here,  
Who like a potent emperor  
Did proudly dominere.
- 225      Our chronicles of him report  
That commonly he rode  
With a thousand horse from court to court,  
Where he would make abode.
- 230      He, riding downe towards the north,  
With his aforesayd traine,  
Robbin and his did issue forth,  
Them all to entertaine.
- 235      And, with the gallant gray-goose wing,  
They shewed to them such play,  
That made their horses kicke and fling,  
And downe their riders lay.
- 240      Full glad and faine the bishop was,  
For all his thousand men,  
To seeke what meanes he could to passe  
From out of Robbins ken. *knowledge (power)*
- 245      Two hundred of his men were kild,  
And fourescore horses good;  
Thirty, who did as captives yeeld,  
Were carryed to the greene wood.
- 250      Which afterwards were ransomed,  
For twenty markes a man;  
The rest set spurres to horse, and fled  
To th'town of Warrington. *[in Lancashire]*

*A True Tale of Robin Hood*

250      The bishop, sore enraged then,  
Did, in King Richards name,  
Muster a power of northerne men,  
These outlawes bold to tame.

255      But Robbin, with his courtesie,  
So wonne the meaner sort,  
That they were loath on him to try  
What rigor did import.

260      So that bold Robbin and his traine  
Did live unhurt of them,  
Untill King Richard came againe  
From faire Jerusalem.

And then the talke of Robbin Hood  
His royall eares did fill;  
His Grace admir'd that i'th' greene wood  
He thus continued still.

265      So that the country farre and neare  
Did give him great applause;  
For none of them neede stand in feare,  
But such as broake the lawes.

270      He wished well unto the king,  
And prayed still for his health,  
And never practised any thing  
Against the common wealth.

275      Onely, because he was undone  
By th'crewell clergie then,  
All meanes that he could thinke upon  
To vex such kinde of men

280      He enterprized, with hatefull spleene;  
In which he was to blame,  
For fault of some, to wreeke his teene  
On all that by him came. *avenge his anger*

*Later Ballads*

With wealth which he by robbery got  
Eight almes-houses he built,  
Thinking thereby to purge the blot  
Of blood which he had spilt.

- 285 Such was their blinde devotion then,  
Depending on their workes;  
Which, if 'twere true, we Christian men  
Inferiour were to Turkes.

- 290 But, to speake true of Robbin Hood,  
And wrong him not a jot,  
He never would shed any mans blood  
That him invaded not.

*Who did not injure him*

- 295 Nor would he injure husbandmen,  
That toyld at cart and plough;  
For well he knew, were't not for them,  
To live no man knew how.

- 300 The king in person, with some lords,  
To Nottingham did ride,  
To try what strength and skill affords  
To crush these outlawes pride.

And, as he once before had done,  
He did againe proclaime,  
What whosoere would take upon  
To bring to Nottingham,

- 305 Or any place within the land,  
**Rebellious Robbin Hood,**  
Should be prefered in place to stand  
With those of noble blood.

*ennobled*

- 310 When Robbin Hood heard of the same,  
Within a little space,  
Into the towne of Nottingham  
A letter to his Grace

*A True Tale of Robin Hood*

He shot upon an arrow-head,  
One evening cunningly;  
315 Which was brought to the king, and read  
Before his Majesty.

The tennour of this letter was  
That Robbin would submit,  
And be true leigeman to his Grace,  
320 In any thing that's fit,

So that his Highnesse would forgive  
Him and his merry men all;  
If not, he must i'th' greene wood live,  
And take what chance did fall.

325 The king would faine have pardoned him,  
But that some lords did say,  
"This president will much condemne  
Your Grace another day."

*precedent*

330 While that the king and lords did stay  
Debating on this thing,  
Some of these outlawes fled away  
Unto the Scottish king.

For they supposd, if he were tane,  
Or to the king did yeeld,  
335 By th'commons all the rest on's traine  
Full quickly would be quell'd.

*taken*

*of his following  
killed*

340 Of more than full a hundred men  
But forty tarryed still,  
Who were resolv'd to sticke to him,  
Let fortune worke her will.

*only 40 remained*

If none had fled, all for his sake  
Had got their pardon free;  
The king to favour meant to take  
His merry men and he.

*Later Ballads*

345 But ere the pardon to him came,  
This famous archer dy'd.  
His death, and manner of the same,  
I'le presently describe.

350 For, being vexed to thinke upon  
His followers revolt,  
In melancholly passion  
He did recount their fault.

355 "Perfideous traytors!" sayd he then,  
"In all your dangers past  
Have I you guarded as my men  
To leave me thus at last?"

360 This sad perplexity did cause  
A fever, as some say,  
Which him unto confusion drawes,  
Though by a stranger way.

This deadly danger to prevent,  
He hide him with all speede  
Unto a nunnery, with intent  
For his healths sake to bleede.

*hurried*

365 A faithless fryer did pretend  
In love to let him blood;  
But he by falsehood wrought the end  
Of famous Robbin Hood.

370 The fryer, as some say, did this  
To vindicate the wrong  
Which to the clergie he and his  
Had done by power strong.

375 Thus dyed he by trechery,  
Who could not dye by force;  
Had he livd longer, certainly,  
King Richard, in remorse,

*A True Tale of Robin Hood*

- Had unto favour him receavd;  
He brave men elevated;  
'Tis pitty he was of life bereavd  
By one which he so hated.
- 380
- A treacherous leech this fryer was,  
To let him bleed to death;  
And Robbin was, me thinkes, an asse,  
To trust him with his breath.
- 385 His corpes the priores of the place,  
The next day that he dy'd,  
Caused to be buried, in mean case,  
Close by the high-way side.
- 390 And over him she caused a stone  
To be fixed on the ground;  
An epitaph was set thereon,  
Wherein his name was found.
- 395 The date o'th' yeare, and day also,  
Shee made to be set there,  
That all who by the way did goe  
Might see it plaine appeare
- 400 That such a man as Robbin Hood  
Was buried in that place;  
And how he lived in the greene wood,  
And rob'd there for a space.
- It seems that though the clergy he  
Had put to mickle woe,  
He should not quite forgotten be,  
Although he was their foe.
- 405 This woman, though she did him hate,  
Yet loved his memory;  
And thought it wondrous pity that  
His fame should with him dye.
- doctor*  
*in a poor state*  
*much*

*Later Ballads*

- 410      This epitaph, as records tell,  
Within this hundred yeares  
By many was discerned well,  
But time all things outweares.
- 415      His followers, when he was dead,  
Were some received to grace;  
The rest to forraigne countries fled,  
And left their native place.
- 420      Although his funerall was but meane,  
This woman had in minde  
Least his fame should be buried cleane  
From those that came behind. *Lest; completely*
- 425      For certaintely, before nor since,  
No man ere understood,  
Under the reigne of any prince,  
Of one like Robbin Hood.
- 430      Full thirteene yeares, and something more,  
These outlawes lived thus,  
Feared of the rich, loved of the poore,  
A thing most marvelous.
- 435      A thing unpossible to us  
This story seemes to be;  
None dares be now so venturous;  
But times are chang'd, we see. *adventurous*
- 440      We that live in these latter dayes  
Of civill government,  
If neede be, have a hundred wayes  
Such outlawes to prevent.
- In those dayes men more barbarous were,  
And lived lesse in awe;  
Now, God be thanked! people feare  
More to offend the law.

### *A True Tale of Robin Hood*

No roaring guns were then in use,  
They dreamt of no such thing;  
Our English men in fight did chuse  
The gallant gray-goose wing.

- 445 In which activity these men,  
Through practise, were so good,  
That in those dayes non equald them,  
Specially Robbin Hood.

- 450 So that, it seems, keeping in caves,  
In woods and forrests thicke,  
Thei'd beate a multitude with staves,  
Their arrowes did so pricke.

- 455 And none durst neare unto them come,  
Unlesse in courtesie;  
All such he bravely would send home,  
With mirth and jollity.

- 460 Which courtesie won him such love,  
As I before have told;  
'Twas the cheefe cause that he did prove  
More prosperous than he could.

Let us be thankefull for these times  
Of plenty, truth and peace,  
And leave our great and horrid crimes,  
Least they cause this to cease.

- 465 I know there's many fained tales  
Of Robbin Hood and's crew;  
But chronicles, which seldom fayles,  
Reports this to be true.

- 470 Let none then thinke this a lye,  
For, if 'twere put to th' worst,  
They may the truth of all discry  
I th'raigne of Richard the first.

*Later Ballads*

*test*

If any reader please to try,  
As I direction show,  
475      The truth of this brave history,  
Hee'le finde it true I know.

And I shall thinke my labour well  
Bestowed to purpose good,  
When't shall be sayd that I did tell  
480      True tales of Robbin Hood.



## *Notes*

- 3      The adjective *stately* has interesting possibilities, both implying a formal style and also suggesting a concern with the state.
- 5      Both early texts read *Robbin* here, as later; it is not clear why Child emends to *Robin*; he does not do so in later instances.
- 6      Both of the earliest editions read *That* to begin this line; it makes a better variation with *Which* beginning line 7; the 1686 edition which Child consulted also reads *That*, and he does not explain the origin of what seems an inferior reading in *Which*.
- 9–12     Parker, like the gentrifying chroniclers, combines Robin's popularity with his elevated status, as if the two are intimately connected.
- 24      Bod. reads *loved* against BL *lov'd*.
- 27      Though the longbow was no longer a serious weapon of the battlefield, regular practice in archery was urged on all male town dwellers in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.
- 28      BL spells *excercise* but Bod. is correct.
- 29      This reason for Robin's downfall is ultimately drawn from Grafton.
- 33      The abbot is in the *Gest*, but there he is antagonistic to the knight, not Robin. Here begins Parker's relentless portrayal of Catholic clerics as the real enemies of Robin Hood, a theme already outlined strongly in Munday's *Downfall*.
- 39      The noun *cutters* implies both swordsmen and robbers: purse-cutters.
- 49      The northern location of the outlaws is a consistent theme throughout this period. It presumably reflects difficulties London experienced in controlling the north throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

### *Later Ballads*

- 68 A remarkable and unique assertion about Robin's anti-clerical ferocity, co-existing bizarrely with the outlaw's *gentle* and *kinde* qualities in the next few lines. In *Robin Hood's Golden Prize* he makes the priests swear celibacy, lines 87–90, but that is hardly a parallel.
- 80 BL reads *wisht* but Bod. has the correct *wish*, which Child also prints.
- 96 A mark was thirteen shillings and four pence; the sum taken was eight thousand pounds.
- 97–100 There is a clear resemblance to *Robin Hood and the Bishop*, which is not recorded until later than *A True Tale*, but was no doubt in circulation.
- 103 In the first editions the word is spelt *ar-*; the 1686 edition spells the word out fully. On villains being forced to ride backwards, face-to-arse, see Thomas Hahn and Richard W. Kaeuper, "Text and Context: Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 5 (1983), 67–101.
- 130 The fact that Robin here attacks the "king's receivers" complicates the politics of the ballad; this is a survival from the late medieval combination of king and abbot as forces ranged against the outlaws, and presumably this causes the withdrawal of sympathy from Robin at the end of the ballad. He is a hero for robbing and even castrating clerics, but tackling the king is another matter. It is interesting that Parker, however, did not completely emasculate his story in this respect, and the Robin Hood figure, *not dreading law* (line 135), finally poses the author with something of a challenge as well. This episode appears to have stimulated the start of *Robin Hood and Queen Catherin*.
- 152 Bod.'s *venson* is metrically a little better than BL's *venison*.
- 183 The 1686 edition has *he kept*, which appears to be a compositor's error.
- 211–12 Parker imagines the outlaw's crimes in vivid contemporary terms; for parallels see Richard Head, *The English Rogue* (1650).
- 229 It is more normal to say "up" if a journey is going north. The idea of a place's importance conveying height is still found in the idiom of "going down" from Oxford, whatever the direction.

### *A True Tale of Robin Hood*

- 233 Arrows often have goose-feather flights, so the term is used metonymically of the arrow itself.
- 250 The model being used here is the political disturbances of the late medieval period, like that led by "Robin of Redesdale" in 1469, when Sir John Conyers deliberately chose an outlaw-like name for his rising; another instance was led by "Robin of Holderness" in the same year.
- 253–54 Parker explains Robin's main support through his elite qualities — a sign of his reworking of the politics of the tradition.
- 263 Bod.'s *i'th*' is a little more precise than BL's *ith*', as is also the case in line 323.
- 282 There is a general resemblance to the end of *Robin Hood's Fishing*, but a closer one perhaps, to the social self-reclamation attempted by donations to charity, especially founding alms-houses by many rich and violent men in the period — a particularly vivid and surviving set of examples are to be found in Stamford, Lincolnshire.
- 287–88 The statement apparently disavows the notion of penance through good works as in Catholic doctrine and moves towards the Reformation idea of those who were "elect" were the only true Christians.
- 293 An apparent reference back to the *Gest*, lines 51–52.
- 317–20 A curious prediction, and perhaps partial source, of the later play *Robin Hood and his Crew of Souldiers* in which Robin, in Nottingham in 1661, submits to the newly established king.
- 327 Renaissance, even Machiavellian, counseling finds its way into the myth; the political drama has become much less direct than it used to be.
- 329 Bod. has one of its rare compositor's errors here, reading *Kiug*.
- 333–36 Seventeenth-century politics are shaping here the course of the medieval outlaw's career. Robin no longer has the instinctive support of his men.
- 345–46 Robin's death is introduced almost as brusquely as in the *Gest* and with the same effect of resolving an impasse in the plot.

### *Later Ballads*

- 352 BL has *his* here, which must be an error picked up from line 350.
- 365 This is the first mention of another hostile cleric in the death sequence: the prioress is sometimes helped by a yeoman who is hostile to Robin, rather like Guy of Gisborne. See the end of the *Gest*.
- 373 In spite of his modernization of the politics and his containment of the hero, Parker is still story-teller enough to underline the essential mythic elements of the story. Whether he is international hero or social bandit, the central figure only comes to death through treachery of someone very close to him, though as in line 383, the tone soon changes.
- 374 Bod. reads *Who*, which seems preferable to BL's *That*.
- 405 Parker attempts to resolve a contradiction in the story: Robin is betrayed at Kirklees yet also remembered there. Parker has some of the instincts of a scholar, or at least a rationalizer.
- 409 Parker clearly invokes the scholarly quest for Robin Hood as found in Grafton, Camden, and Leland.
- 419 Bod. has *cleare* which loses the rhyme and must be an error.
- 425 The *Gest* says Robin dwelled in the green wood after leaving the court *twenty yere and two*. Perhaps *thirteene* is meant as an unluckier period.
- 427 The resemblance to the theme song of the 1950s British television series starring Richard Greene —“Feared by the bad, loved by the good” — is presumably accidental.
- 429 Child reads *impossible* which he cites as the Bod. reading, and a correction to BL's *unpossible*. But Bod. actually also reads *unpossible*, which must be accepted.
- 431 There follows a curious passage, partly nostalgic for the heroic freedom of the past, partly anxious to assure readers of the security of the present. The Robin Hood tradition, it appears, has the power to test its transmitters.
- 442 BL and Child read *dreamp*, but Bod.'s *dreamt* is preferable.

### *A True Tale of Robin Hood*

- 448 The 1686 edition prints *Especially* but both early editions have the metrically slightly rougher *Specially*.
- 460 The meaning seems obscure. Does it imply that he “proved to be more prosperous than he ought to have done?” If so, then *should* might be a better reading, but the texts are unanimous for *could*. Or does it perhaps mean “he seemed more prosperous than he really was?” It is clear that Parker is here trying, as throughout this passage, to moderate enthusiasm for the hero, and this seems to lead him into a lack of clarity.
- 463 It is not clear what Parker has in mind as *our great and horrid crimes*, but it adds to the sense of tension throughout this passage, and brings to a somewhat anxious climax the recurrent modernization of the Robin Hood story, as his actions hover between the anti-state violence and quasi-cavalier gentility.
- 470 Bod. has the slightly more accurate *if 'twere*, where BL reads *if't were*.
- 476 Child reads *Hee'l* but in fact both early editions have *Hee'le*.
- 478 BL has a comma after *Bestowed*, but Bod. does not; the latter seems the better reading.
- 480 To support his insistence on veracity, Parker appended the alleged epitaph from Kirklees: this was much copied, even translated into bogus Middle English and carved in stone. It appears to have been written by Parker on the basis of the remarks and hints given by Grafton and Camden; for a discussion, see Holt, 1989, pp. 41–42, and Knight, 1994, pp. 19–21:
- Robert Earle of Huntington  
Lies under this little stone.  
No archer was like him so good:  
His wildnesse named him Robbin Hood.  
Full thirteene years, and something more,  
These northerne parts he vexed sore.  
Such out-lawes as he and his men  
May England never know agen.

## ***Robin Hood and the Pedlars***

### ***Introduction***

According to Child the manuscript in which *Robin Hood and the Pedlars* occurs contains “a variety of matters, and, as the best authority [E. Maunde Thompson, Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum] has declared, may in part have been written as early as 1650, but all the ballads are in a nineteenth-century hand, and some of them are maintained to be forgeries” (III, 170). *Robin Hood and the Pedlars* is surely one of the “forgeries,” a work composed most likely in the early nineteenth century by an antiquarian enthusiast who has read plenty of Robin Hood ballads and who has a good quotient of off-color wit. The verse is in rollicking ballad stanzas that mingle conventional devices (interrogatory opening with promises of smiles to come, stock phrases and situations, syntactic inversions, repetitions, action through dialogue, and archaisms) with bits and pieces of old plot. But there are surprises along the way, especially toward the end where the wounded Robin takes a “balsame” which, according to the decorous Child “operates unpleasantly” (III, 171) and which Gutch before him had labelled a “nasty incident” (II, 355). But what seemed obscene to nineteenth-century editors, namely, the once gentrified hero not only beheld vomiting, but vomiting in the faces of his buddies, is likely to seem crudely amusing to the more vulgar inclination of a late twentieth-century audience. Part of the amusement lies in the poet’s blending of euphemism with specifics — no puking or even vomiting for the nineteenth-century writer but, rather “he gan to spewe, and up he threwe” (line 110); this he combined with a cute moral that warns against challenging people stronger than oneself (lines 117–20). Such ploys are sufficiently risqué and upright to reveal the anonymous author’s playful delight in honoring his heroes by besmirching them. As in many a tale of Robin, the hero wins, then, over-confident in his rough and tumble way, loses only to win over his opponent through his fall, albeit here disgustingly.

*Robin Hood and the Pedlars* is part of popular representation of a carefree “former age” that early nineteenth-century England thrived upon under the penumbra of Scott’s *Ivanhoe*. The matter is light, the imitations clever, and the effect primitively vulgar, a primitivism that enables a prim audience to titillate itself in a socially acceptable way, despite the unpleasantries and nastiness of what the “old ballad” said.

## *Robin Hood and the Pedlars*

I have used Child's transcription as my base text, with some alterations in capitalization (Ff>F) and punctuation. I have not seen the nineteenth-century manuscript.

### Select Bibliography

*Robin Hood and the Peddlers*. In *A Lytell Geste of Robin Hode with Other Ancient and Modern Ballads and Songs Relating to this Celebrated Yeoman, to which is prefixed his history and character, grounded upon other documents than those made use of by his former biographer, "Mister Ritson."* Ed. by John Mathew Gutch. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1847. II, 351–55.

*Robin Hood and the Pedlars*. In *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Ed. F. J. Child. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1888. III, 170–72.



### ***Robin Hood and the Pedlars***

Will you heare a tale of Robin Hood,  
Will Scarlett, and Little John?  
Now listen awhile, it will make you smile,  
As before it hath many done.<sup>1</sup>

- 5      They were archers three, of hie degree,    *high*  
      As good as ever drewe bowe;  
Their arrowes were long and their armes were strong,  
As most had cause to knowe.
- 10     But one sommers day, as they toke their way  
      Through the Forrest of greene Sherwood,  
To kill the kings deare, you shall presently heare    *deer*  
      What befell these archers good.
- 15     They were ware on the roade of three peddlers with loade,  
      For each had his packe.  
Full of all wares for countrie faires,  
Trusst up upon his backe.
- 20     A good oke staffe, a yard and a halfe,  
      Each one had in his hande,  
And they were all bound to Nottingham towne,  
As you shall understand.
- “Yonder I see bold peddlers three,”  
Said Robin to Scarlett and John;  
“We’le search their packes upon their backes  
Before that they be gone.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gutch reads *many a one*.

## *Robin Hood and the Pedlars*

- 25     “Holla, good fellowes!” quod Robin Hood,  
      “Whither is it ye doe goe?  
Now stay and rest, for that is the best,  
      ’Tis well ye should doe soe.”
- 30     “Noe rest we neede, on our roade we speede,  
      Till to Nottingham we get.”
- 35     “Thou tellst a lewde lye,” said Robin, “for I  
      Can see that ye swinke and swet.”                          *stupid  
labor and sweat*
- The peddlers three crosst over the lee,  
      They did not list to fight:  
35     “I charge you tarrie,” quod Robin, “for marry,  
      This is my owne land by right.                                  *wish*
- 40     “This is my mannor and this is my parke,  
      I would have ye for to knowe;  
Ye are bolde outlawes, I see by cause  
      Ye are so prest to goe.”    *eager*
- The peddlers three turned round to see  
      Who it might be they herd;  
Then agen went on as they list to be gone,  
      And never answered word.    *as they yearned*
- 45     Then toke Robin Hood an arrow so good,  
      Which he did never lacke,  
And drew his bowe, and the swift arrowe  
      Went through the last peddlers packe.
- 50     For him it was well on the packe it fell,  
      Or his life had found an ende;  
And it pierst the skin of his backe within,  
      Though the packe did stand his frend.
- 55     Then downe they flung their packes eche one,  
      And stayde till Robin came;  
Quod Robin, “I saide ye had better stayde;  
      Good sooth, ye were to blame.

### *Later Ballads*

- “And who art thou? by S. Crispin, I vowe,  
I’le quickly cracke thy head!”  
Cried Robin, “Come on, all three, or one;  
It is not soone done as said.
- Saint  
*more often boasted than done*
- “My name, by the Roode, is Robin Hood,  
And this is Scarlett and John;  
It is three to three, ye may plainelie see,  
Soe now, brave fellowes, laye on.”
- Cross
- 65      The first peddlars blowe brake Robins bowe  
That he had in his hand;  
And Scarlett and John, they eche had one  
That they unneth could stand.
- each took a blow*  
*scarcely*
- “Now holde your handes,” cride Robin Hood,  
“For ye have got oken staves;  
But tarie till wee can get but three,  
And a fig for all your braves.”
- chutzpa*
- Of the peddlers the first, his name Kit o Thirske,  
Said, “We are all content.”
- 75      So eche tooke a stake for his weapon to make  
The peddlers to repent.
- Soe to it they fell, and their blowes did ring well  
Upon the others backes,  
And gave the peddlers cause to wish  
They had not cast their packes.
- taken off*
- Yet the peddlers three of their blowes were so free  
That Robin began for to rue;  
And Scarlett and John had such loade laide on  
It made the sunne looke blue.
- 85      At last Kits oke caught Robin a stroke  
That made his head to sound;  
He staggerd and reelde, till he fell on the fielde,  
And the trees with him went round.

## *Robin Hood and the Pedlars*

- “Now holde your handes,” cride Little John,  
90 And soe said Scarlette eke; also  
“Our maister is slaine, I telle you plaine,  
He never more will speake.”
- “Now, heaven forefend he come to that ende,”  
95 Said Kit, “I love him well;  
But lett him learne to be wise in turne,  
And not with pore peddlers mell. tangle
- “In my packe, God wot, I a balsame have got  
That soone his hurts will heale”; medicine  
And into Robin Hoods gaping mouth  
100 He presentlie powrde some deale. immediately poured; part
- “Nowe fare ye well, tis best not to tell  
How ye three peddlers met;  
Or if ye doe, prithee tell alsoe  
How they made ye swinke and swett.” labor and sweat
- 105 Poore Robin in sound they left on the ground, unsound  
And hied them to Nottingham,  
While Scarlett and John Robin tended on hastened themselves  
Till at length his senses came.
- Noe sooner, in haste, did Robin Hood taste  
The balsame he had tane, taken  
110 Than he gan to spewe, and up he threwe  
The balsame all againe.
- And Scarlett and John, who were looking on  
Their maister as he did lie,  
Had their faces besmeard, both eies and beard, eyes  
115 Therwith most piteously.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Gutch suggests that “this nasty incident seems taken from *Don Quioxte*” (II, 355).

*Later Ballads*

Thus ended that fray; soe beware alwaye  
How ye doe challenge foes;  
Looke well aboute they are not to stoute,  
Or you may have worst of the blowes.

*too strong*

120



## **From *Hereward the Wake***

### ***Introduction***

As Charles Plummer says, Hereward has a brief life in history and a long one in romance (*Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* [1889], II, 265). The real Hereward (as recorded in *Domesday Book* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) seems to have been a small south-Lincolnshire squire, holding lands from the abbeys of Crowland and Peterborough, and thus very much “the monk’s man,” although regularly in dispute as to tenancy agreements (*The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus*, ed. W. T. Mellows [1949] p. 79). The battle of Hastings which brought William of Normandy to power was not necessarily considered decisive in the more remote provinces, and Norman colonization was slow to reach this part of England. In the spring of 1070 the Danish king Swein Estrithson arrived in the mouth of the Humber, and was expected to make a bid for the crown. He despatched a body of housecarls under Jarl Asbjorn and Bishop Christian of Aarhus to secure a base on the Isle of Ely, a tract of fertile land capable of supporting six hundred households, some twelve by ten miles, in the middle of the swampy fenland of south Lincolnshire (Swanton, p. 188, note 18, and references there cited). Ely was admirably suited for defense; sea-going vessels could reach it via the Wash and River Ouse, but landwards it was cut off by swamps and a network of hidden waterways. Here the Danes were immediately joined by local people (many of whom were of Danish extraction), including Hereward. At Peterborough Abbey, on the western edge of the Fens two dozen miles away, the abbot Brand, perhaps Hereward’s uncle, had recently died, and now the monks were warned that Hereward and his companions wanted to remove the monastery’s valuables prior to the arrival of a Norman abbot, the tyrannical Turolf, who was approaching with a band of 160 soldiers. The monks resisted Hereward and his men, who set fire to the town, forced the precinct gate and looted the monastery. Soon afterwards the Danes returned to Denmark, taking this loot with them. Hereward and his band remained behind, but were now *personae non gratae* with Turolf and others who had taken up estates in the area.

Ely now became a notorious refuge for anti-Norman dissidents, including, among the better known, Earl Morcar of Northumbria, Bishop Æthelwine of Durham, and Siward Bearn, a substantial Midlands landowner. Popular rumor even suggested that Earl Eadwine, in fact now dead, and Archbishop Stigand, in fact now in prison, also

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

sought shelter there (Freeman, IV, 9). At last William himself led an expedition against Ely. He bottled up the defenders, placing a naval blockade on the seaward side and then constructing a lengthy causeway to allow his land forces to advance through the swamps. Eventually the defenders surrendered to William who “did with them what he wanted.” Florence of Worcester says that some he imprisoned, others he let go free, having cut off their hands or put out their eyes (*Chronicon ex Chronicis*, ed. B. Thorpe, II, 9). But Hereward slipped away with some of his followers and is heard of no more in any official record. Later, like some other resistance leaders, he may have been reconciled with the Conqueror. Gaimar suggests that he was in charge of an English contingent fighting on behalf of William in Maine, and was subsequently killed by a bunch of jealous Norman knights (*L'Estoire des Engleis*, ed. A. Bell, pp. 178–80). A man called Hereward held lands in Warwickshire at the time of William’s death (*Domesday Book*, 23, *Warwickshire*, ed. J. Morris, 16: 26, 44, 48). The surname Hereward survived in Ely through the thirteenth century; thus, Robert Hereward, bailiff and seneschal of the Bishop of Ely c. 1296, and afterwards sheriff in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk (E. Miller, *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely*, pp. 267–68).

The exploits of so notable a hero immediately captured the popular imagination. It is said that women and girls sang about him in their dances, and the author of the pseudo-Ingulf claimed to know ballads celebrating, and no doubt exaggerating, his deeds (*Gesta III; Rerum Anglicarum Scriptorum Veterum*, pp. 67–68). An extensive folk-literature was circulating within a few years of his death. Much of what was said seems to have been incorporated into the *Gesta*, from which extracts are printed here. He was soon ascribed fine family connections, and an elaborate pedigree by those keen to claim him as an ancestor. Of course, if he was actually related to one or another noble family, it would account for the prominence he is given in the record of resistance to William. The cognomen “the Wake” (i.e., the watchful one) is first recorded in a later chronicle attributed to one John of Peterborough (*Chronicon Angliae Petriburgense*) that acknowledges the necessary characteristics of the successful guerilla leader. Charles Kingsley’s novel published in 1866, in which the story of this most famous of English freedom-fighters achieved its definitive modern form, is simply an engrossment of the *Gesta* material.

The origins of the *Gesta* are explained by the author in his introduction, addressed to an unnamed authority — perhaps Hervey, first bishop of Ely, 1107–31. It was compiled in two stages. The first developed out of the author’s attempts to read a few decayed and mutilated pages which had apparently formed part of a collection of stories written in the vernacular, allegedly by Hereward’s “well-remembered” chaplain Leofric, whose intention it had been to assemble all the doings of giants and warriors he could find in ancient fables as well as in “true reports.” On the basis of this,

### *Hereward the Wake*

perhaps half read, half invented, the author constructed a plainly fictional account of Hereward's youthful exile (corresponding to chapters III–XIII). Story rather than history, *geste* rather than *gesta*, most of the formulae are readily paralleled in contemporary saga and romance. It was conventional that a young man in exile should visit the courts of foreign princes, and there prove himself in deeds of valor and prowess. Hereward is made to follow the traditional route of the fictional exile through the peripheral regions of Britain combating a monstrous bear in Northumberland, rescuing a princess in distress in Cornwall, and fighting in Ireland, before passing on to Flanders, the common resort of refugees from England at this time. In the course of all this, the personality of the future guerrilla-fighter is anticipated: courageous, quick-witted, adept at disguise and watchful — sleeping not in but to one side of his bed for fear of night-time attacks. After a lengthy sojourn in Flanders, full of incident reminiscent of Harold Godwinson's period in Normandy, the hero is said to return to England.

At this point, apparently frustrated at finding no more adequate source, the author says he laid his work aside. But prompted by the original commissioner, he again takes up his pen and completes the book with the addition of a somewhat episodic account of Hereward's part in the defense of Ely, based on interviews with the hero's former associates in the anti-Norman campaign. Some of them are named, and one or two seem to have suffered retributive mutilation at the hands of the Normans. These chapters (chs. XIV–XXXVI *passim*) are entirely different in tone from the preceding farago. Albeit the reminiscences of now elderly veterans, and no doubt recalled "with advantages," these tales of guerrilla skirmishes have the air of reality. Even so, elements of romance creep in: the hero has a mysterious vision of St. Peter (ch. XXIX); a grey wolf guides his companions through the marsh, while will-o-the-wisp lights flicker around their spear-tips (ch. XXIX); one of his enemies begs for mercy with his head through a lavatory seat (ch. XXX); his eventual reconciliation with the king is brought about by the attentions of a beautiful and wealthy widow (ch. XXXI).

#### **Author and Date**

If we are to believe the author's claim that he drew on first-hand rather than second-hand accounts, the great likelihood is that the *Gesta* was composed in the first quarter of the twelfth century, at a time when Hereward himself was presumably dead, but a number of former companions, albeit elderly, were still alive and capable of remembering their old campaigns.

Some time in the mid-twelfth century an unnamed monk of Ely Abbey compiled

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

an eclectic history of his institution, in the course of which he says he drew on a *Gesta Herewardi* made "not long since" by a respected and "most learned" fellow monk called Richard (*Liber Eliensis*, p. 188). There is a close verbal parallel with our text, and it is reasonable to suppose that this Richard was the author of the extant *Gesta* or an earlier version of them. By that time Richard was apparently dead ("of blessed memory"). His identity is uncertain, but he was clearly familiar with the locality and of sufficient status to be able to call on assistants; but his Latin is not of the clearest and scarcely fits the description *doctissimus* ("most learned").

### **Manuscript and Edition**

The *Gesta* survives in a single manuscript copy, added to a thirteenth-century collection of Peterborough Abbey charters, legal documents, etc., belonging to Robert de Swaffham, pittancer and cellarar of the abbey, now Peterborough Cathedral Manuscript 1, ff. 320–39. A reliable text was printed by T. D. Hardy and C. T. Martin in their edition of Geoffrey Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engles*, Rolls Series 91, London (1888–89), I, 339–404.

### **Select Bibliography**

*The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus*. Ed. W. T. Mellows. London: Oxford University Press, 1949.

*Chronicon Angliae Petriburgense*. Ed. J. A. Giles. London: David Nutt, 1845.

*Chronicon ex Chronicis*. Ed. Benjamin Thorpe. London: English Historical Society, 1848–49.

*Domesday Book*. Text and translation edited by John Morris. Chichester: Phillimore, 1975–92.

Freeman, Edward Augustus. *The History of the Norman Conquest of England*. 6 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1867–79.

Gaimar, Geoffrey. *L'Estoire des Engleis*. Ed. Alexander Bell. Anglo-Norman Text Society. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960.

*Hereward the Wake*

Hayward, John. "Hereward the Outlaw." *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988), 293–304.

*Liber Eliensis*. Ed. E. O. Blake. Camden Third Series XCII, London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1962.

Miller, E. *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

Swanton, Michael. *English Literature Before Chaucer*. London: Longman, 1987.

*Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*. Ed. Charles Plummer, based on an edition by John Earle. 2 vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1889.



## **From *Hereward the Wake***

### I

**Here begins the preface of a certain work concerning the exploits of Hereward the renowned knight.**

When some among us wanted to know about the deeds of the great Englishman Hereward and his famous men, and to hear with our ears his generous acts and exploits, your brethren eked out our sparse information by enquiring whether anyone had left anything in writing about such a man in the place where he used to live. For when I informed you that I had heard somewhere that a short account had been written about him in English, you were immediately kind enough to have it sought out; and soon it was translated into Latin, with the addition of things we happened to hear from our own people with whom he was familiar, living a distinguished life as a great warrior. So, wanting to satisfy your wishes, I took care to enquire in many places, yet found nothing complete — only a few loose pages, partly rotten with damp and decayed and partly damaged by tearing. However, having taken up the pen, I have with difficulty extracted from it a few details as to his origin, his parents and reputation — that is to say the early achievements of the most famous outlaw Hereward, written down in English by the deacon Leofric, his priest at Bourne. For it was the endeavor of this well-remembered priest to assemble all the doings of giants and warriors he could find in ancient fables as well as true reports, for the edification of his audience; and for their remembrance to commit them to writing in English. And although I'm not sufficiently expert at this, or rather, unable to decipher what is obliterated in the unfamiliar writing, nevertheless I gather that on his return to the place of his own ancestral home, he found his brother killed — and so on. I leave this raw material, written in a rough style, to your care and to the efforts of some trained person, to be arranged and set out in a less ornate and complex manner. For I have been able to decipher nothing further than this, always hoping for more but still finding nothing in full. For a long time my assistants were deluded by a vain hope, stimulated by those who said that there was a large book about his exploits in such and such a place. But although they sent to the place they found nothing of what was promised. So giving up the search altogether, I abandoned the work I had begun. It could not have remained secret from you for long; but unexpectedly, you were kind enough to direct that at least the opening should not be denied you. Whereupon I took care, although not confident of any great ability, that your eyes might

## *Hereward the Wake*

see the complete work. I took up the pen once more to unfold to you a little book in the style of a history, dealing with things I heard from our own people and from some of those who were familiar with him from the beginning and who were associated with him in many exploits. I have frequently seen some of these men — tall in stature, well-built and exceptionally courageous. And you yourself, I hear, have also seen two of these men — that is to say his knights Brother Siward of Bury St. Edmunds and Leofric Black, men of distinguished appearance, although having lost the beauty of their limbs due to the trickery of enemies, being deprived of certain members through envy. And from these and others whom I have seen and tested in many matters if on no other grounds, here is sufficient for you to understand how valorous their lord was, and how much greater his deeds were than those reported of him. For truly to know who Hereward was and to hear about his magnanimity and his exploits is conducive to magnanimous acts and generosity, especially in those wishing to undertake the warrior's life. So I urge you to pay attention, especially you who are concerned to hear of the exploits of brave men; listen carefully to this account of so great a man who, trusting in himself rather than rampart or garrison, alone with his men waged war against kings and kingdoms and fought against princes and tyrants, some of whom he conquered. Concerning these matters, beginning with his parents, everything has been arranged in due order, so that what is clearly set down here may be easily remembered.

## II

### **Of what parents Hereward was born, and how from his boyhood he increased in the splendor of his deeds, and why he was driven forth by his father and country; whence he was surnamed "The Outlaw."**

Many very mighty men are recorded from among the English people, and the outlaw Hereward is reckoned the most distinguished of all — a notable warrior among the most notable. Of very noble descent from both parents, his father was Leofric of Bourne, nephew of Earl Ralph the Staller; and his mother was Eadgyth, the great-great-niece of Duke Oslac. As a boy he was remarkable for his figure and handsome in his features, very fine with his long blond hair, open face and large gray eyes — the right one slightly different from the left. However, he was formidable in appearance and rather stout because of the great sturdiness of his limbs; but despite his moderate stature he was very agile and there was great strength in all his limbs. From his childhood he exhibited such grace and vigor of body; and from practice when a youth the quality of his courage proved him a perfect man. He was excellently endowed in every way with the grace of courage and strength of spirit. And so far as generosity is concerned, he was particularly liberal with his own and his father's possessions, giving relief to all in need. Although tough in

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

work and rough in play, readily provoking fights among those of his own age and often stirring up strife among his elders in town and village, he had no equal in acts of daring and bravery, not even among his elders. So when young, and as he grew older, he advanced in boldness day by day, and while still a youth excelled in manly deeds. In the meantime he spared nobody whom he thought to be in any way a rival in courage or in fighting. In consequence he often caused strife among the populace and commotion among the common people. As a result of this he made his parents hostile towards him; for because of his deeds of courage and boldness they found themselves quarreling with their friends and neighbors every day, and almost daily having to protect their son with drawn swords and weapons when he returned from sport or from fighting, from the local inhabitants who acted like enemies and tyrants because of him. Unable to stand this, eventually his father drove him out of his sight. He didn't keep quiet even then; but when his father went visiting his estates, Hereward and his gang often got there first, distributing his father's goods amongst his own friends and supporters. And on some of his father's properties he even appointed stewards and servants of his own to see to provisions for his men. And so his father ensured that he was banished from his homeland by King Edward, disclosing everything that he had perpetrated against his parents and against the inhabitants of the locality. And this being done, he at once acquired the name of "Outlaw," being driven away from his father and his native land when he was eighteen years old.

[During his exile, Hereward engages in various adventures. III: He slays a monstrous bear in Northumberland, and IV: a braggart in Cornwall, suitor for the hand of the princess; and V: the leader of an invading army in Ireland. VI: He returns to the Cornish princess and attends her nuptials in disguise, rescues the girl and ensures her marriage to an Irish prince. VII: Now determined to return home, Hereward is shipwrecked in Orkney, and again in Flanders where he is honorably detained by the count, changing his name to Harold. VIII-IX: Hereward fights on behalf of the Count of Flanders against the neighboring Count of Guines, and his true name is revealed. X: During the course of his sojourn, the skilled and enterprising girl Turfida falls in love with him, and he with her, despite the violent opposition of another knight. XI-XII: Hereward takes the central role in two campaigns against rebellious Frisian armies. XIII: While in Frisia he acquires a particularly swift mare he names Swallow, and her colt Lightfoot.]

## *Hereward the Wake*

### XIV

**How he returned to his country and to his father's house, where he found that his brother had been slain the day before, and of the grand vengeance he took the same night.**

After Hereward had spent a few days in idleness [in Flanders], thinking this disgraceful he left and immediately set out for England. He wished to visit his father's house and his homeland, now subject to the rule of foreigners and almost ruined by the exactions of many men, wanting to help any friends or neighbors who perhaps might still be alive in the place. He returned from foreign parts with his personal attendant Martin Lightfoot as his sole companion, leaving his two nephews, Siward the Blond and Siward the Red together with the wife he had just taken. He arrived back at his father's manor called Bourne one evening time, and was entertained on the outskirts of the village by a certain soldier of his father's called Osred. There he found the head of the household and his neighbors very gloomy, all full of grief and in great fear, having been given over to the subjection of foreigners. And what was worse for them, they were bewailing the fact that they were subject to those who the previous day had slain the innocent younger son of their lord. Immediately therefore Hereward, who appeared as if a stranger, asked who their lord now was, who was responsible for the death of their former lord's son, and the reason for it. And they answered him: "Although it is a help and a comfort in sadness to share one's grief, we shouldn't involve you in our misfortune, for we see that you're a great man with whom we ought to be joyful for the sake of hospitality. Nevertheless, because you appear to be in every way a great and famous man, we might look to you for some remedy for our sorrow, so we will readily explain the business to you. There was among us a certain younger son of our lord whom his father, when dying, commended to his people, together with his mother; and he was to be his heir if his brother, called Hereward, shouldn't return — a man most vigorous and conspicuous in all courage, whom while still a lad his father had driven away from his presence by way of punishment. And now, three days ago, certain men seized his inheritance with the consent of the king and took it for themselves, destroying our light, the son and heir of our lord, while he was protecting his widowed mother from them as they were demanding from her his father's riches and treasures — and because he slew two of those who had dishonorably abused her. By way of revenge because he had killed two Frenchmen, they cut off his head and set it up over the gate of the house — here it still is. Alas, wretched men that we are, we have no power of vengeance! Would that his brother Hereward, a very great man so we've often heard, were here now; for then truly before the moon set and the sun sent forth its rays of light, every one of them would be lying dead like our lord's son!" Hearing this, Hereward lamented greatly, sighing inwardly. At length, being drowsy after their conversation, they all retired to rest. After lying on his bed for a while, Hereward heard

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

some way away the voices of people singing, the sound of harp and viol and the merriment of those applauding. Summoning a lad, Hereward enquired what the sound was that echoed in his ears. He immediately declared it to be the merriment of those joining in the party given on the occasion of their entering into the inheritance of his lord's son, who had been killed by them the previous day.

After a little while Hereward called his servant and, taking a mail-coat and helmet from beneath a black cloth — a maid-servant's cloak — put on his tunic and took a sword. And thus, with his servant protected by light armor, he approached the party-goers who were now overcome with drunkenness, intending to pledge them for his brother's death with a draught of bitterness and wine of sorrow. Then he came near; he found his brother's head over the gate. Taking it, he kissed it and concealed it, wrapped in a cloth. This done, he advanced through the entrance of the building to search out the guests. He saw them all by the fireside overcome with drunkenness, the soldiers reclining in the women's laps. Among them was a jester playing a lute, abusing the English race and performing antics in the middle of the hall meant in imitation of English dancing, who eventually demanded in payment from their lord something which had belonged to the parents of the remarkable lad killed the previous day. At this one of the girls at the banquet, unable to tolerate these words, replied: "There still survives a distinguished soldier by the name of Hereward, brother to the lad killed yesterday and well-known in our country (that is to say, in Flanders); and if he were here, none of these would be left alive when the sun spread abroad its rays of light!" Indignant at these words, the lord of the household answered thus: "Well, I happen to know the man, and a great scoundrel he is, for he stole the gifts which were sent to the prince of our country from Frisia and distributed them unfairly after the prince had appointed him leader of the soldiers. Now he would have suffered death on the gallows, if he hadn't ensured his safety by running away, not daring to stay in any land this side of the Alps!" On hearing this, the jester continued repeatedly to abuse him as he sang to the lute. Eventually unable to tolerate this any longer, Hereward leapt out and struck him through with a single blow of his sword, and then turned to attack the guests. Some were incapable of rising because they were drunk, and others unable to go to their help because they were unarmed. So he laid low fourteen of them together with their lord, with the aid of the single attendant whom he set at the entrance of the hall so that whoever escaped the hands of one might fall to the other. And that same night he set their heads over the gate where his brother's head had been, giving thanks to the Bestower of all grace that his brother's blood was now avenged.

## *Hereward the Wake*

### XV

#### **For what reason some fled from him in alarm; and whence he chose for himself men of war.**

In the morning, however, the neighbors and those living round about were filled with astonishment at what was done. And almost all the Frenchmen in the district were frightened, abandoning the lands assigned to them and fleeing, lest the same thing should happen to them at the hands of such a man should they have him for a neighbor. But having heard about him, the inhabitants of the country and his kinsfolk flocked to him, congratulating him on his return to his native land and to his father's inheritance, and advising him to guard it carefully in the meantime, dreading the anger of the king when he came to learn of the affair. In fact not unmindful of such matters, he lodged there forty-nine of the bravest men from his father's estate and among his kinsfolk, equipped and defended with all necessary military accouterments. Meanwhile he wanted to carry on for a few days taking vengeance on those of his enemies in the neighborhood who still remained on their manors.

### XVI

#### **For what reason he wished to be made knight in the English manner, and where he was made knight.**

When Hereward realized that he was the leader and lord of such men, and day by day saw his force growing larger with fugitives, the condemned and disinherited, he remembered that he had never been girt with the belt and sword of knighthood according to the tradition of his race. And so with two of the most eminent of his men, one named Winter and the other Gænoch, he went to the abbot of Peterborough called Brand, a man of very noble birth, in order that he might gird him with the sword and belt of knighthood in the English tradition, lest after becoming the chief and leader of so many men, the inhabitants of the country should disparage him for not being knighted. He received the accolade of knighthood from the abbot on the Feast of the Nativity of the Apostles Peter and Paul. And in his honor a monk of Ely named Wulfwine, who was both a faithful brother and prior and also a friend of Hereward's father, made his comrades knights. Hereward wanted himself and his men to be knighted in this way because he heard that it had been ruled by the French that if anyone were knighted by a monk, cleric or any ordained minister, it ought not to be reckoned the equal of true knighthood, but invalid and anachronistic. Opposing this regulation, therefore, Hereward wished almost all those serving him and under his rule to be knighted by monks. So if anyone wanted to serve under him he had to receive the sword in the manner the knight's tradition

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

demands, from a monk at least, if from no one else. Often he would point out: "I know from common experience that if anyone should receive the knightly sword from a servant of God, a knight of the kingdom of heaven, such a man will pursue valor most excellently in every kind of military service." And hence arose the custom among those at Ely that if anyone there wished to be made a knight, he ought always to offer his naked sword upon the altar at high mass and the same day receive it back again after the gospel reading from the monk who was singing mass, the sword being placed on his bare neck with a blessing; and by making over the sword to the recruit in that way, he was made a full knight. This was the custom of abbots in those times. Later Hereward was to go to the Isle of Ely and, together with its inhabitants, defend it against King William who by that time had subjected almost the entire country to himself.

### XVII

#### **How he was sought out by a certain man who desired to kill him, and how Hereward slew him.**

Having returned to his own people, Hereward learned that a certain Frederick, who was the brother of the old Earl William de Warenne, had been making frequent enquiries for him in many places, in order that he might either take him personally into the king's presence and hand him over to punishment for what was mentioned a little earlier; or alternatively cut off his head and set it up for a sign at a cross-roads on the public highway, in the same way as he had exhibited over the gate of his house the heads of those who had stolen his inheritance and slain his brother; and further, that he might drive into exile or mutilate all those who continued to support Hereward or rendered him any assistance. But Hereward and his men immediately set about preempting him, intending to treat him in the same way if by chance they should meet with him. For Hereward had learned that Frederick was in Norfolk together with a military force, so that as soon as anything was heard of Hereward, Frederick might make his way there protected by a troop of soldiers. But what Frederick intended should happen to Hereward happened to himself instead. One evening time while he was plotting the death of Hereward, the outlaw himself arrived and slew him.

### XVIII

#### **Why Hereward departed again into Flanders, where he soon performed some noteworthy deeds.**

To allow the situation to cool down after this, Hereward went into Flanders to see the

## *Hereward the Wake*

wife he had recently taken, promising those whom he left in England that he would return within the year. And there at St. Omer he came to his wife and the two nephews whom he had left with her. He had not been there a fortnight before he was invited by Baldwin, a certain highly celebrated knight of that province, to join a campaign he had undertaken against the Viscount de Pynkenni. The lord of Brabant with his nobles was also to be present at this encounter. And on this expedition Hereward and his two aforementioned nephews Siward the Blond and Siward the Red, together with the aforesaid noble knight Baldwin who led them there, acted in such a way that even the opposing party did not withhold their commendation but greatly praised them, picking out Hereward especially as an object of admiration. Once when his boldness had carried him too far among the enemy, they killed his horse beneath him, and thus being alone and on foot they surrounded him on all sides. Not that this did them any good, for it proved the speedy destruction of his attackers, since he slew seven of those who rushed to seize him. At length when he was surrounded by a wall of enemies on all sides, several of the leaders of the opposing party, perceiving his spirit and courage, helped him by calling off his attackers. They said it was shameful for so many to be attacking a single man the whole day long, and scarcely finish the business in the end. "And even if he were to be eventually overcome, what sort of victory would that be for us, for one man to be overcome by so many? There would certainly be a slur on our reputation. And even though he may fall in the end, he deserves to be esteemed above everyone else." While Hereward was duly recovering a little from these attackers, unharmed by any weapon, a mounted comrade showed great enterprise, coming to his aid and snatching him up so that he was reunited with his men. Then from horseback he told everybody what had happened to him and recounted with what generosity the enemy had acted despite the fact that he had killed seven of their men who had inadvisedly attacked him. This event resulted in such good-will on both sides that, out of respect for such a knight, all those who were formerly at odds were reconciled; and they honored him with gifts.

## XIX

**How on his return to England his men gathered themselves together to him, on his giving the signal which he had arranged at his departure.**

But as he had promised his men, Hereward, now eminent in all military matters, returned to England together with his two nephews and his loving wife Turfrida who was already superior to the usual feminine weaknesses and regularly proved capable in every exigency which befell her celebrated husband. There also came with him a certain chaplain of his, Hugo the Breton by name, who although a priest, was no less trained in arms than endued with virtue, and Wivhard his brother, a splendid knight of soldierly

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

courage. He obviously also brought with him those in his service. Some of these Hereward immediately sent to explore his own area and his father's house, so as to make careful enquiries as to what had been decided about him by the king's majesty, and with the utmost caution to find out from friends in his father's territory where those men whom he had left in England now were. When they eventually got there, they found his inheritance entirely undisturbed, no one having dared to enter it. Some of his men they found in hiding, thus ensuring their safety. And these, instantly delighted at his return, hastened to join him, namely: a certain Winter, a distinguished knight who was short in stature but particularly robust and strong; and Wenoth and *Ælf*ric Grugan notable in all courage and bravery for they were as powerful in action as they were big and tall. In addition to these were three of Hereward's nephews: Godwine Gille, who was called Godwine because not dissimilar to Godwine the son of Guthlac who is so celebrated in stories of olden days; and Duti and Outi, two twin brothers similar in character and appearance and both praiseworthy soldiers. The remainder of his band of followers, however, was scattered over the entire kingdom. At his departure he had arranged a signal for them — to set in flames three villages on Brunneswold near to Bourne; and so he set fire to them and retired into the forest until his men were gathered around him.

And when they were all assembled, they were all the most eminent men, not one among them being counted of knightly rank without first having achieved some notable deeds. These are their names (with those mentioned above making up the number): Wulfric the Black, who got his name because he had once daubed his face with charcoal and gone unrecognized into a garrison, laying low ten of them with a single spear. And his friend was a certain Wulfric Rahere, or "The Heron," so-called because he once happened to be at Wroxham Bridge where four brothers were brought who, although innocent, were to be executed; and terrifying the hangmen who had called him "heron" in mockery, he manfully caused the innocent men to be released and killed some of their enemies. Others too were numbered among the more distinguished of Hereward's knights: Godric of Corby, a nephew of the Earl of Warwick; and Tostig of Daveness, kinsman of the same earl and whose name he received at baptism; and Acca Hardy, the son of a gentleman from the outskirts of Lincoln who was personally responsible for one of the towers of the city; and Leofwine Mowe, that is "The Sickle," who got his name because, chancing to be alone in a meadow cutting grass, he had been set upon by a score of local peasants with iron pitchforks and spears in their hands, whereupon quite alone with only his sickle he wounded many and killed some, charging among them like a reaper, and finally putting them all to flight.

In company with these was also a certain Tunbeorht, a great nephew of Earl Edwin, and Leofwine Prat, that is "the Dodger," who was called this because although often captured by enemies he had astutely escaped, frequently killing his guards. And in addition to these must be numbered others also very experienced in warfare: Leofric the

## *Hereward the Wake*

Deacon, the Bailiff of Drayton; Thurcytel Utlamhe — that is to say, “the Outlaw”; Hereward’s cook Hogor; Hereward’s kinsmen Winter and Leofred, two distinguished men; and Rapenald, steward of Ramsey. These were leaders; so also: Wulfric the Black and Wulfric the Blond, Ælfric Grugan, Yiardus, Godwine Gille, Outi — and the other Outi I mentioned before — and those two splendid men, Siward and the other Siward the Red, who were Hereward’s nephews. Then with these there were other most eminent knights: Godric of Corby, the Norman priest Hugo and his brother Yiardus, Leofric the Deacon, Tostig of Rothwell, Leofwine Prat, Thurcytel, and the Bailiff of Drayton. All of these were among the most distinguished and splendid knights in the whole kingdom; and there were not a few others, whom it would take too long to name and describe separately.

## XX

### **How the men in the Isle of Ely sent for Hereward; and how on the road he discovered an ambush by the Earl of Warenne.**

Now when those who lived in the Isle of Ely, then beginning to hold out against King William who had gained England in battle, heard of the return of such a man as Hereward, they directly sent to him and negotiated through messengers for him to join them with all his men, to take part together with them in the defense of the homeland and their fathers’ liberties, assuring him that such a knight as he was would have the foremost position among them. This message was delivered especially in the name and on behalf of Thurstan, abbot of the church at Ely, and his monks, who had lordship of the Isle, and by whom it was put in a state of defense against the king, in particular because William intended to set a certain foreign monk over them — one of those monks for whom he had already sent from the French nation, to set as deans and priors in all the churches of the English.

However, having previous knowledge of this, a certain well-known knight and seaman, Brunman by name, being familiar with the coast, intercepted them at sea, ducked them in the ocean in a large sack that he had tied to the prow of his ship, and sent them back, thus freeing the English monasteries from foreign domination for the time being. Hereward was delighted to receive this envoy and finally directed his men to make preparations for the journey, boarding ship at Bardney. Hearing of this, the Earl de Warenne, whose brother Hereward himself had recently slain, prepared many ambushes along his road in secret hiding-places near the routes out from the Isle through the swamp, cautiously placing a guard round the waters on the land-side and hoping to capture him without serious loss to his own men. In the event, however, this was not hidden from Hereward. Certain of the guards stumbled across some stragglers from his force and assailed them with missiles. Coming to their aid and capturing their attackers,

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

he ascertained from these that the ambush was laid by the Earl de Warenne who was himself coming to Earith the following day. Whereupon, hastening with his ships, Hereward assembled his men there. Concealing his troops near the river bank, Hereward himself with three knights and four archers well equipped with arms drew close to the edge of the river opposite to where the earl and his men had just arrived. Upon seeing them, one of the earl's men approached and said this to them: "Are you from the company of that great scoundrel Hereward who has ruined so much by trickery and has drawn so many to help him in his nefarious deeds? Would that the villain could be betrayed to our lord the earl. Anyone who agreed to do so would be well worth payment and honors. For this hostile band, although not dangerous, may eventually force us to live in this detestable swamp, and to chase them unarmed through muddy marsh, swirling water, and sharp reeds. Every one of them is destined to an early death, for the king has already surrounded the whole island on all sides with his army, and has closed off the area so that he may destroy its inhabitants." At these words, one of them retorted: "You good-for-nothing! How much longer are you going to incite us to betray our lord and desert our leader? Run off back; shift your feet, before you go down under fierce javelins. And tell your lord that the man he's asking for is here on this side of the water." Learning this, the earl immediately approached and, catching sight of Hereward, urged all his men to swim across the water with him to avenge the blood and death of his brother. But they insisted that it wasn't possible, saying that Hereward had come there just to trap them in that very way. Whereupon, snarling, he railed against those lying across the water: "Oh, would that your master, that limb of Satan, were in my grasp now; he should truly taste punishment and death!" Understanding these words, Hereward declared: "But if by good luck we two happened to be by ourselves anywhere, you wouldn't be so keen to have me in your feeble grasp nor be glad that we met!" And leaning forward a little, Hereward stretched his bow and shot an arrow with force against the earl's breast. Although it rebounded from the protecting mailcoat, the earl was rendered almost lifeless by the blow. Whereupon his men, very anxious on their lord's account because he had fallen from his horse at the blow, quickly carried him away in their arms. Meanwhile Hereward went away and that very day withdrew his men into the Isle of Ely, where he was now received with the greatest respect by the abbot and monks of the place. And he was honored by the important men in the Isle, that is to say by the former Earl of Leicester, Edwin, and his brother Morcar Earl of Warwick, and by another earl called Tostig, all of whom had fled to join those in the Isle having suffered many wrongs at the hands of the aforesaid king and being harassed by many demands. Not a few of the country's distinguished men had fled and were led to the place for the same reason.

## *Hereward the Wake*

### XXI

**How the king attempted to take the Isle, where he nearly lost his entire army; while no man, except one brave knight, entered it.**

Consequently when the king heard about this he was moved to enormous anger and, goaded by deep indignation, furiously applied himself to taking the Isle by storm. In fact, he moved his whole army to Aldreth where the surrounding water and swamp was narrower, the breadth there extending only four furlongs. Having brought there tools and fitments of timber and stone, and heaps of all kinds of things, they built a causeway through the swamp, although it was narrow and quite useless to them. Moreover, close to the big river near this place, that is to say Aldreth, they assembled in the water large tree-trunks joined together with beams, and underneath tied whole sheep-skins, flayed and reversed and fully inflated so that the weight of those going over it might be better borne. When this was finished such a multitude rushed onto it all at once, greedy for the gold and silver and other things, not a little of which was thought to be hidden in the Isle, that those who went hurrying in front were drowned together with the road itself they had made. Those who were in the middle of the company were swallowed up in the watery and deep swamp as well. A few of those who were following at the rear got away with difficulty, flinging down their weapons, wallowing in the water and making their way through the mud. Thus in this way, with hardly anybody pursuing them, great numbers perished in the swamp and waters. And to this day many of them are dragged out of the depths of those waters in rotting armor. I've sometimes seen this myself. And out of this entire company I've talked of, not one got into the Isle, except by chance a single eminent knight called Deda who went on in front of everybody. But in any case, nobody from the Isle was caught in the trap. For some of them had made a heap of turves on the bank of the aforesaid river in front of the bulwarks and ramparts, laying ambushes to both right and left. The king, observing all these things from a distance, evidently saw where his men in front were swallowed up in the swamp and water; wherefore, groaning with deep, heartfelt sorrow, he left together with those of his men who still survived — very few compared with the number of those who were drowned — setting aside all hope of making any further attack on the Isle. Nevertheless, he set a guard there and positioned soldiers round about lest the islanders should have free passage to lay waste the district.

### XXII

**Of a soldier who went into the Isle, and resolved to be the first to give information to the king about the Isle and its inhabitants.**

Now the cunning soldier whom I mentioned a little while ago as having got into the

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

Isle, was captured and led before the chief men and dignitaries in the Isle of Ely. When he was asked his name and the reason for his coming, they found out from him that he went by the name Deda, and the reason was this. The king, in the presence of his men, had made a bargain that whoever was first to make his way into the Isle and inflict injury there, might ask him for any property in the Isle, and the king promised he should have it for sure. When they heard this, the islanders praised his boldness and courage and had him stay with them for a few days so that he might get to know their valor from personal experience and realize what a secure position they held, being provided with the protection of a strongly fortified location and strengthened in no small way by companies of distinguished soldiers. For, as he often declared in their presence, he had heard many times that they were less proficient in war and less skilled in military affairs than other races. But before he left he recognized that they were quite excellent in all matters, and proficient in the art of warfare. And so he was given permission to leave on these terms: that he should report about them nothing other than what he had seen and heard — and this he had to affirm with an oath. Enriched with a gift, he eventually got to the court of the king. On his arrival everyone together there heartily congratulated him, and indeed the king himself was delighted, for he was the most renowned among the more distinguished of the king's knights. When questioned before the whole court, Deda explained how by some lucky chance he had entered the Isle unharmed. As related above, great numbers perished while going along the road which they had made. He said that out of all of them he alone had been brought alive into the Isle by Hereward, the leader of the soldiers in the island. He affirmed that through Hereward he had been given an honorable place amongst the more distinguished of the troop of soldiers. Then at Hereward's enquiry he had told them of the reason for his coming — explaining to him the king's promise that the first man to enter the Isle and inflict injury there should be rewarded with a very great honor. On the king's closely questioning Deda still further, he went through the ranks of the chief men in the island and their names, and recounted the splendid nature of their activities in defense of the Isle, and how well strengthened they were by troops of distinguished soldiers, and in no small measure protected by groups of the toughest men. Those he ascribed to the first rank were: the three earls mentioned earlier, namely Edwin, Morcar and Tostig, and the two noblemen Ordgar and Thurcytel "the Lad."

And in talking about them he extolled Hereward and his men more highly than themselves and above all the knights he had seen among the French, or in the German Empire, or at Byzantium for valor and courage in all matters; and although some might be equal to Hereward, none, he said, could surpass him. At this the Earl de Warenne, whose brother Hereward had recently killed as I explained above, moved to anger and goaded by deep indignation declared: "Well, it's quite evident from what you say that you're not a little deceived, in that you would induce our lord king to show kindness by

### *Hereward the Wake*

extolling his enemies with false praise and arguments of this sort. Besides are you going to set up that great scoundrel Hereward for courage and bravery? Now leave off burdening his respected majesty the king with such frivolous talk!" To whom the aforesaid soldier replied, saying that he had not been seduced by a bribe or gift, nor was he persuaded by any consideration; he had only to tell the truth about them without fear or favor, and having taken an oath to this effect he had been allowed to leave. And in replying, he asked how he could keep silent about such things when they demanded to know what he had seen with his own eyes and had himself experienced, without either offending the lord king or violating his oath by falsely reporting other than the truth. So the king directed that he should tell them, but that he should be considered without offence in this, declaring that he had long known him to be a truthful soldier, and reckoned that he was not exaggerating in this now. Once more, therefore, the aforesaid soldier was closely questioned, not only by the king but by many others, asking if the enemy were in need of provisions or any other necessaries, or if there were any further experienced men than those he had previously related, so as to find him out in any contradiction in his account, or rather that they might learn something to assist them in the siege. To this he made just one reply: "Well, if you are still anxious to hear their cause it is, as I understand it, as follows: It is because his respected majesty the king had given instructions that monks from overseas should be appointed deans and priors in all the churches of the English — and for whom your eminence had just recently sent, that is to say those whom a certain distinguished English knight called Brunman intercepted at sea because of this, ducking them in the ocean in a big sack and sending them back, thus freeing his kindred from foreign domination for the time being. For this cause, fearing subjection to foreigners, the monks of that place risked endangering themselves rather than be reduced to servitude, and gathering to themselves outlaws, the condemned, the disinherited, those who had lost their parents, and such like, they put their place and the island in something of a state of defense. There's no pressure on account of the numbers of the army over there, and they aren't oppressed by the enemy. For although besieged by four kings and their subjects, the ploughman doesn't take his hand from the plough, nor does the right hand of the reaper hesitate in reaping; the hunter doesn't neglect his hunting spears, nor does the fowler stop lying in wait for birds by the banks of rivers and in woods, so those in the Isle are well and plentifully supplied with almost all living things. At the time when the water-fowl are molting and changing their appearance, I've commonly seen trappers there bringing in lots of small birds: very often a hundred, sometimes two hundred or more, and occasionally not far off a thousand from one stretch of water. Similarly from the woods that are in the Isle there is at one time of the year a good supply of heron, quite apart from the abundance of wild and domesticated animals. And certainly the waters which surround the Isle abound with all kinds of fish. What more need I say? Indeed, every day during the time I spent there we

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

made ourselves sick with the sumptuous English-style feasts in the monks' refectory — soldier and monk always going to dinner and supper together, at the high table the abbot with the three earls mentioned earlier, seated side by side with the two most distinguished men, Hereward and Thurcytel the Lad. Above each and every knight and monk there hung against the wall a shield and lance; and down the middle of the hall from top to bottom on the bench were placed mailcoats, helmets, and other arms, for the monks as well as the soldiers never scorned to take their turn and go out on a military patrol. Indeed, in what I noticed there, this one thing above all others struck me as remarkable, that almost all the monks of that place are so well-versed in warfare — a thing I've certainly never heard of before, nor have I come across such anywhere else. Certainly I don't know that they are in need of anything as regards defense, let alone in spirit, when they have a fruitful island, so productive of every kind of grain and growing things, and so well fortified by waters and swamp, much stronger than any castle surrounded by walls. Nevertheless, I hope that my lord king will not cease attacking them, and then he will find that I haven't deviated from the truth, and will realize that in the end it would be better to make peace with them than be continually attacking them and getting absolutely nowhere."

### XXIII

#### **What they did when they were disheartened about the Isle, and how the king was disposed to make peace with them, unless some of his own men had dissuaded him.**

Well, just then while he was relating this, one of those soldiers the king had sent to effect the blockade at Reach Dyke came in, and as soon as the story was finished, expostulated: "Don't you believe it? Does it seem so unlikely? Only yesterday I saw several men coming out of the Isle — not many — only seven, but dressed for battle and girt with proper war-equipment — all but two of whom were manifestly monks, and like the others well-versed in warfare. And exercising the rights of the military, they set fire to the village of Burwell and did damage everywhere — and not only these men but often others as well, rushing in all directions. Some of our men, ten in number who were engaged in the blockade, dashed in front of us all without consideration for themselves, thinking to capture them because they were fewer in number than us. Anyway, they finally intercepted them opposite the aforesaid dyke, within mutual lance-throwing distance. And after a long struggle all our men finally succumbed except for one distinguished soldier called Richard, who took his surname from his uncle Sheriff Osbeorht. One of the outlaws called Wennoth, leaving the main body, had stuck closely to Richard in order to take him. While these two continued to struggle, those who had come out from the Isle stood by for a long time and could see neither of them prevailing. And observing us

### *Hereward the Wake*

approaching from a distance with a force of soldiers, the leader of their soldiers, Hereward, had them separated and allowed no one to offer violence against Richard, saying that it was shameful for two or three to fight against one man, and would in no way allow such a thing to be done by his men; and this we learnt from the mouth of Richard himself. However, we finally pursued them right up to their ships, killing one of their boatmen with a javelin and capturing another who told us their ranks and described who they were, adding their names: the leader of the soldiers Hereward, Wennoth, young Thurstan who was afterwards named prior, Brother Siward of St. Edmunds, Leofric, and Acca Hardy, so named because he was hardy in enduring pain. Although monks, these were certainly most highly distinguished in all military matters and had frequently undertaken deeds of valor with Hereward and were well-tried in their experience of battle.

However, the king made no reference to this, no word either good or bad, saying to himself that it was unworthy to abuse men who had acted generously, and equally so to favor his enemies with praise in front of his own men. He contemplated making peace with them, knowing the Isle to be strongly defended both by nature and by the finest of men, and realizing that he could in no way prevent their coming and going there. So summoning the magnates and counsellors, he explained to them what was in his mind, to make peace with those in the Isle, declaring that it would be very serious to leave such men in the middle of the land at his rear, when they ought already to be marching against the Danish army and after that to go directly to Normandy. Whereupon several of the leaders who were present and were most intimate with him, hearing this, hastily dissuaded the king from doing it, because the islanders had invaded many of their estates and taken their property, sharing it all out among themselves. They said: "If you let them off with impunity — those who have rebelled against your sovereignty so forcibly and for so long — and are persuaded to make peace with them without their humbly begging and pleading for it, and even concede them privileges, then everyone will laugh at your supremacy and no one will be afraid to act likewise in your kingdom." To this the king angrily replied that he could not take the Isle or any place so naturally fortified by the power of God. To which one of those present, Ivo de Taillebois by name, indignantly answered: "Well, for a long time now I've known a certain old woman who could by her art alone, if she were present, crush all their courage and defense and drive them all out of the island in terror." And moreover he declared that he was willing to send for her, if the king agreed. On hearing this, all those who were present earnestly urged this on the king, saying that they should not oppose but rather assist such a work, and enrich with the greatest rewards anyone who could by art, invention, or any way whatever, crush the enemies of the lord king. And so the king, complying with their words and arguments, ordered the hag to be brought directly; but it was to be done in secret though, not openly. Afterwards he had his army again gather to surround the Isle, guarding it closely on all sides,

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

personally appointing sentries here and there and arranging a blockade, lest anyone should come out from the island and discover what action they were taking towards assaulting it, whereby they might contrive some opposing art or invention.

#### XXIV

**How Hereward dressed up as a potter and went to the king's court to spy out what they meant to do; and how he cheated them, and slew some in the king's court, and returned unharmed.**

These matters being put in hand by the king therefore, the entrances to the Isle were so blocked up that it was quite impossible to enter or leave it. This was an unexpected cause for despondency and alarm to them, not knowing what action was to be taken against them, or what kind of attack, inasmuch as they heard that the king had learned of some new method of making war. So they decided that they ought, somehow or other, to send a man out to reconnoitre. Finding no one quite suitable however, at length it seemed best to Hereward to go out himself to reconnoitre in disguise, although everyone objected strongly, resisting his inclination. But in the end he set off, taking with him his mare called Swallow, who was perpetually drooping and awkward in appearance but whose great speed and willing endurance I have mentioned before. As he left he changed his clothes, cut his hair and beard and donned a greasy cloak. Coming across a potter, he took his jars and, pretending to be a potter, made his way to the king's court at Brandon. Arriving there the same evening, he happened to spend the night at the house of a widow where there lodged the witch whom I mentioned earlier had been brought in to destroy those who were in the Isle. There that same night Hereward heard them discussing in French how they were going to bring about the downfall of the Isle. (They supposed him to be a peasant and unfamiliar with the language.) Then in the middle of the night Hereward saw them go out silently to a spring of water which flowed to the east near the garden of the house. So he promptly followed them, and at a distance heard them talking, questioning some unknown guardian of the spring and awaiting replies. In the end he decided to deal with them on their return, but their lengthy delay prevented this plan, although leading to even greater and more daring adventures.

Early next morning Hereward took up his pots and left. Wandering all round the king's court, he called out in the manner of a potter: "Pots, pots, good pots and jars! All first-class earthenware!" Now in the course of this he was led into the king's kitchen by some servants so that they might buy some pots. And one of the town bailiffs coming in by chance immediately exclaimed on catching sight of him that he had never seen a man so much like Hereward in his appearance, nor so much like him in his bearing — insofar as a poor man could resemble a man of noble birth, or a peasant a knight. Hearing this,

### *Hereward the Wake*

some people came to look at one who so resembled Hereward; and thus he was led into the king's hall among the knights and squires so they could see him. And looking at him closely, some of them declared that a man of such moderate height could scarcely boast so much bravery and valor as popular rumor attributed to him. And others asked him if he knew or had ever seen the scoundrel Hereward. To which he replied: "Would that I had that limb of Satan here among us now; then I'd get my own back! He's more detested by me than anybody, for he stole a cow of mine, four sheep, and everything I had, except for my pots and my nag, which up to now have been the livelihood of me and my two boys!"

Now in the meantime orders were given for the king's dinner to be prepared, and Hereward returned to the kitchen. Then after dinner the servers, cooks, and kitchen-boys together plied themselves with wine and strong drink, with the result that they got drunk and made great fun of Hereward. In the end, sodden with wine, they tried to shave his head and pluck out his beard; and they blindfolded him and put his pots down on the ground all around so that he broke them. When he refused to submit to their buffoonery, one of them came up and hit him hard. But Hereward hit him back under the ear so that he fell to the ground insensible, as if he were dead. Seeing this, the man's friends all rose up and attacked Hereward with two- and three-pronged forks. So snatching a piece of wood from the fireplace, he defended himself against them all, killing one of them and wounding many. This was immediately made known throughout the palace, with the result that he was seized and taken prisoner.

Then while he was in custody, the king having gone out hunting with his retinue, one of the guards approached, carrying in one hand iron shackles with which he intended to load Hereward, and in the other an unsheathed sword. Hereward promptly seized him and attacked him with his own sword, so that he tasted death; and after him he dealt out destruction to several others. And so, setting himself free, he went down over fences and ditches into the lower courtyard of the house, where he found his horse. As he mounted, one of the king's pages caught sight of him and accosted him with foul language, warning his friends and the king's servants to give chase to him; but the pursuit of one and all was so slow, and Hereward's flight so effective that, crossing the island of Somersham and travelling throughout that evening and at night by the light of the moon, he came secretly to the Isle in the early hours of the dawn. Out of all those who had given chase, none heard any word of him, or saw any sign, except for one man who chanced to go deeper into the forest, where his horse unexpectedly succumbed to fatigue and he himself could hardly stand on his feet. Coming across him by chance, Hereward immediately asked him who he was, and he replied: "One of the servants from the king's retinue who have been pursuing a fugitive peasant who by guile today killed his guard and one of the king's pages. So if you've seen or heard anything, for God's sake, and of your kindness, tell me!" "Well," said Hereward, "since you ask for God's sake, and appeal to my kindness, let me

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

tell you that I am myself the man you're looking for. And now, so that you'll know me better, and will the more truthfully declare to your lord the king that you've spoken with me, you can leave behind your sword and lance as a token and, if you want to keep your life, promise me that you'll tell them the way it was!" And so this aforesaid servant eventually got back and, as he had promised, told the king about Hereward. Everybody listened in amazement; and the king declared that Hereward was a generous and most remarkable knight.

### XXV

#### **How Hereward disguised himself as a fisherman, and cheated the king a second time; and how the king attacked the Isle, and about their means of defense.**

Then when the war-engines were prepared as he had arranged, and in furtherance of which he had travelled there, the king began the attack, leading his entire army to Aldreth. He had also brought heaps of wood and stone and all materials for building ramparts there. And he ordered all the fishermen in the district to come with their boats to Cottenham so that they could ferry across what had been brought there, and with it construct mounds and hillocks at Aldreth from the top of which they might fight. Among these came Hereward, like a fisherman with a boat along with the rest. They diligently ferried across everything that had been brought there. Finally on the same day — the sun not going down without some damage done — Hereward finished his work and before he left set fire to it. As a result it was entirely burnt, and several men killed and swallowed up in the swamp. He had shaved his beard and head so as not to be recognized, employing various disguises to encompass the death of enemies and the destruction of foes, preferring to look bald for a while and forego his finely-styled locks, rather than spare his opponents. When it was learned that Hereward had again escaped with impunity, the king declared that it was shameful to be so frequently ridiculed by him. However, the revered king, among other things, gave instructions commanding his men that above all Hereward should be brought to him alive, and that they should keep him unharmed. And taking warning from the damage done on this occasion, they set a day-and-night guard over all their property and operations.

Thus struggling for a week they just about completed one mound and set up four wooden bastions on which to site the war-engines. But those in the Isle resisted vigorously, building outworks and ramparts to oppose them. And then on the eighth day they all advanced to attack the island with their entire force, placing the witch I mentioned earlier, in an elevated position in their midst, so that being sufficiently protected on all sides, she might have space in which to practice her art. Once mounted, she harangued the Isle and its inhabitants for a long time, denouncing saboteurs and

## *Hereward the Wake*

suchlike, and casting spells for their overthrow; and at the end of her chattering and incantations she bared her arse at them. Well, when she had performed her disgusting act three times as she wished, those who had been concealed in the swamp all around to right and left among the sharp reeds and brambles of the marshland, set fire to part of it so that, driven by the wind, the smoke and flames surged up against the king's camp. Spreading for as far as two furlongs, the fire ran hither and thither among them, making a horrible sight in the swamp, and the roar of the flames and crackling of twigs in the brushwood and willows making a terrible noise. As a result, stupefied and greatly alarmed, the king's men fled, each man for himself. But they could not go far along those watery paths through the wastes of the swamp, and they could not keep to the track easily. In consequence very many of them were suddenly swallowed up, and others, overwhelmed with arrows, drowned in the same waters, for in the fire and in their flight they were unable to use their lances against the bands of those who came cautiously and secretly out from the Isle to repel them. Among them the aforesaid woman who practiced her abominable art, fell down in the greatest terror head-first from her exalted position and broke her neck.

And among the few who escaped — compared with the number of the fallen — the celebrated king himself carried right back to his men's camp an arrow stuck deep in his shield. Seeing which, his men were alarmed, thinking him wounded and bewailing the fact. To banish their hesitancy and fear, the king declared: "I've no wound to complain of, but I am pained that I didn't adopt a sounder plan from all those that were suggested to me; for which reason almost all our men have fallen, deceived by the cunning of an abominable woman and encouraged by our ignorance as to her detestable art — even to listen to whom ought to be damnable! In fact, we've deserved what's happened to us."

About this time Earl Ralph Guader, having secretly assembled a very large army, invited certain persons from among the English people to his wedding and by force and trickery compelled them to bind themselves to him by an oath. And he laid waste and subjected to himself the entire country between Norwich, Thetford, and Sudbury. Wherefore, thinking he was making a bid for the kingdom and nation, the three well-known earls and all those of high birth who were in the Isle now went off to join him, leaving Hereward and his men to guard the Isle alone.

## XXVI

**How and wherefore the men of Ely made an agreement with the king; upon which Hereward wanted to burn the church and town.**

At length the king recognized that despite all these preparations, his efforts to take the island by war or by force were to no avail. And considering how many of his men he had

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

just lost on this one occasion, and also what great numbers he had lost previously, he decreed that the external lands of the church and the property of the monks should be divided among his more eminent followers, who only had to guard the island from outside. In consequence therefore, several people appropriated the church lands in the vicinity, claiming them for themselves. Hearing this, the monks of the church in question adopted a more prudent plan in their activities; and upon the return of the abbot, who together with the aforesaid earls had fled in disguise to Bottisham with the ornaments and treasures of the church, asked the king for peace-terms, on condition that he would freely and honorably restore to them all the lands of the church. This was done one day in secret though, so that Hereward should not know of it. They were received graciously by the king; and they arranged for the king to come to the Isle rapidly and secretly at a certain time when Hereward was out foraging with his men, in order that it might be managed without bloodshed and serious slaughter. However, one of the monks, Eadwine son of Ordgar, went to tell him that they had already been received by the king and had struck a bargain with him. He met Hereward already en route, marching with his men from the river bank, carrying brands to set fire to the church and town as a result of what they had heard. The monk with many prayers and entreaties stood out against him, warning him rather to look to his safety by flight, if he was unwilling to join them in securing peace, adding that the king with all his army was within a furlong at Witchford. Eventually he yielded to his words and arguments because he had been a friend to him and a good comrade in war and of practical help in many of his needs. Thus he was persuaded. He decided upon immediate action and, with his boats which he had well defended with arms to guard the waters surrounding the Isle, withdrew to a certain mere called Wide near Upwell, a large expanse of water with ample channels and having an easy way out. And because he had dispatched some of his men to inflict damage at Soham and lay waste the land with fire there, he intended to wait there until the scouts that he secretly sent should lead them to him quickly to prevent their being captured. When at length they were found in a little island called Stuntney, they thought Hereward's messengers were chasing them, and hid themselves among the reeds some distance away in the swamp. In fact, two of them lurking together, a certain Starcwulf and Broga, reckoned it might give them a better chance of safety if they had a tonsure like monks. And so they gave each other a tonsure as best they could with their swords. But in the end a shouted exchange brought mutual recognition, and assembled together they made their way back to their leader.

## *Hereward the Wake*

### XXVII

#### **How Hereward was reduced to such straits that he slew with his own hands his excellent horse; and how next he overcame the army of five provinces.**

After some respite from serious pursuit in the aforesaid mere, Hereward was more severely besieged by those in the region and by the king's men, and so hard-pressed that in despair he slew with his own hands his splendid horse, so that no lesser man should boast that he had got Hereward's horse. But at length he escaped from this danger with his men, passed over Brunneswold and went to live in the great forests of Northamptonshire, laying waste the land with fire and sword. Eventually therefore at the king's command an army was assembled from the counties of Northampton, Cambridge, Lincoln, Holland, Leicester, Huntingdon and Warwick, which all came together on a pre-arranged day and with a host of soldiers tried to capture Hereward and his men, searching for him everywhere in the forests near Peterborough where he was staying at the time. And there, when surrounded by enemies and unable to avoid their hands, he moved about from place to place in the more remote parts of the forests in the district, waiting for his men and friends whom he had summoned to help him. Meanwhile he had the shoes on his horses' feet put on back-to-front, so that it could not be discovered from their tracks where they were or where they were going. He gave instructions that the friends and fellow-soldiers for whom he had just sent were to do the same. These arrived one by one as best they could. Now that Hereward knew that there was no place to turn to, because warfare closed in on him on all sides, it seemed best to him to make an attack on his pursuers with a small number from the rear, front or flank, before they were prepared for battle, since he now had a hundred picked soldiers with him, and among them some of the toughest men, besides a few archers and slingmen. For in those days Hereward happened to have many men, both from that region and further afield, who came to him for military training and who, in order to be instructed in this, left their lords and friends and joined Hereward, having heard of the fame of his men. Several even came from the king's court to find out whether what they had heard of him could possibly be true. Hereward received these with caution, however, and with an oath of fidelity. For there was a very great number of knights and foot-soldiers from the regions there, and Turold, abbot of Peterborough, and Ivo de Taillebois were leading the king's army to deal death to them all. Then Hereward and his men, not frightened by their numbers although they were seriously beset on all sides, made preparations. They concealed all their archers and slingmen positioned in the trees, standing unseen among the branches to discharge their missiles from above, so that when fighting they might be shielded from below and defended in this way lest they were unable to endure the force of a charge in any way. And thus they advanced from beneath the woodland trees under cover of their archers, Hereward always leading the way in everything. Immediately following him came

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

Regenweald, steward of Ramsey, who always acted as standard-bearer to his army. And other celebrated soldiers shared positions given them to right and left, the names and valor of which most distinguished men in so famous a battle it would be proper to record, in memory of what the few achieved against so many. And the most famous of them, and rightly held foremost both for warfare and courageous spirit, one Winter by name, was on the left flank. These had advanced on horseback, not without due consideration, to take the brunt of the attack. And becoming separated from the rest in the foray, these daring men charged the enemy, broke through their front line and killed many. And having inflicted some damage thus, they retired to the forest for protection, lest they should be unable to withstand the host of the enemy if they attacked in force. Finding their feet however, they retraced their steps again — and again and again, all day long, advancing and retreating, attacking great numbers, their friends continually covering them with missiles hurled from above and ensuring their safety in retreat. As they strove in this way into the afternoon, the horses of their adversaries as well as the heavily-clad soldiers were greatly irritated, pursuing them in their flight, and waiting in armor all day long for them to come out again. Eventually they left off besieging the camp. And then Hereward with all his men immediately came on them from the rear in a single rush, engaging in a significant encounter, capturing and taking prisoner several men including five of some importance. Among these the aforesaid abbot of Peterborough was captured, as well as others of great distinction. Then, learning of this, the enemy ceased fighting, although they were at close quarters, lest they should ill-treat or kill those whom they had taken. I have recounted the remarkable course of their battle up to this point. This last engagement proved a great blow and no little destruction to the enemy, who were completely worn down with fatigue; and being cut off from their camp, they now began to retreat.

### XXVIII

#### **How Hereward took vengeance upon the abbot of Burgh.**

Afterwards the aforesaid abbot of Peterborough was released from captivity by Hereward for a ransom of thirty thousand pounds. And one of Hereward's kinsmen called Siward the Blond set free the abbot's nephew and others whom they had captured, all of whom he had treated with honorable hospitality out of respect for the abbot. But remembering neither their kindness nor their agreement, they repaid Hereward by once more making war on him and his men. To this purpose, the aforesaid abbot distributed many of the estates of his church to knights on condition that they gave military assistance to subdue Hereward, on account of the trouble he had given the abbot. He arranged that they should attack Hereward as a duty in return for their lands. However,

## *Hereward the Wake*

when Hereward heard reports of this, and that a punishment hung over him in return for his kindness, he did not long delay, but the same night went with his men to Peterborough to avenge themselves. And laying waste the whole town with fire, they plundered all the treasures of the church and chased the abbot, although he and his men managed to escape by hiding themselves.

### XXIX

#### **Of a vision and a marvelous occurrence seen by Hereward.**

In his sleep the following night, Hereward saw standing before him a man of indescribable appearance, in old age, fearsome of countenance, and more remarkable in all his clothing than anything he had ever seen or imagined in his mind, now menacing him with a great key which he brandished in his hand, and with a fearful injunction that if he wished to ensure his safety and avoid a miserable death the next day, he should restore in their entirety all those possessions of his church which Hereward had taken the previous night. Indeed, on waking he was seized with holy dread, and that very hour carried back everything he had taken away, and then moved on with all his men. On their journey they unexpectedly went astray, losing the right path. A marvelous thing happened to them while they were astray thus — a miracle, if such things can reasonably be said to happen to flesh and blood. For while in the stormy night and gloom they were wandering hither and thither through the forests, not knowing where they were going, a huge wolf came in front of them, fawning on them like a tame dog and walking along in front of them down the path. In the obscuring gloom they mistook it for a white dog because of its grey coat, and urged one another to follow the dog closely, declaring that it must have come from some village. This they did. And in the midst of the night, while they discovered that they had succeeded in getting out of the by-way and recognizing the road, suddenly there appeared burning lights clinging to the soldiers' lances — not very bright, but like those popularly called will-o-the-wisps. No one could get rid of them, or extinguish them, or throw them away. Whereupon, greatly marvelling amongst themselves, although they were stupefied they could see their way, and went on led by the wolf. And then with dawning day they all eventually found to their astonishment that their guide had been a wolf. And while they were at a loss to know what had happened to them, the wolf disappeared, the lights vanished, and they had got to where they wanted, beyond Stamford. And realizing that their journey had been successful, they gave thanks to God, marvelling at what had happened to them.

*Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

XXX

**How Hereward pursued an enemy and granted him mercy.**

Hereward had not been there more than three days when he heard that an enemy of his would be in the aforesaid town, a man who had often tried to ruin him and hand him over to those enemies who had lately broken faith with him. Whereupon to see if what he had heard was true, he set out with just two men. And when the fellow realized that Hereward was on his way, he immediately resorted to flight. Hereward hastily followed his track from house to house, from garden to garden, with a naked sword and a small shield in his hand, right into the great hall where many men from the man's own district were assembled at a club dinner. But having nowhere to turn, Hereward being so close on his heels, he left, fleeing into the interior of the house where, putting his head through the hole in a lavatory seat, he begged for mercy. And moved by a generous spirit, for he was always most gracious in all his ways, Hereward did not touch him there, nor inflict any injury in word or deed, but returned the way he had come, passing rapidly through the middle of the house. And being astonished, none of those feasting there ventured to grumble or upbraid him about what had happened, since they had nothing in their hands but just drinking-horns and wine-cups.

XXXI

**How Hereward's wife assumed the habit of a nun at Crowland.**

In the interval, however, Turfrida, the aforesaid wife of Hereward, had already begun to turn away from him because at the time he was receiving frequent envoys from a woman asking him to marry her. She was the widow of Earl Dolfin and particularly powerful on account of her wealth. She should obtain a license from the king which, as she had heard from the king's mouth, she could have for the asking if Hereward were peaceable and willing to pledge faith with him. For this reason, therefore, charmed with the beauty of the woman, Hereward gave his consent, for there was nobody more lovely nor more beautiful in the realm, and scarcely anybody more eminent in their wealth. Consequently, he sent messengers to the king and asked for the aforesaid woman, saying that he was willing to be reconciled with the king's majesty. He received Hereward's messengers graciously and, accepting what he proposed, appointed a day to meet him, adding that he had for a long time been wishing to receive him into his favor. In consequence Hereward's own wife, about whom I spoke a little earlier, went to Crowland and chose the better life, taking the holy veil. As a result of this many unfortunate things

## *Hereward the Wake*

happened to him later on, because she had been very wise and good with advice in an emergency. For subsequently, as he himself often admitted, much happened to him which would not have done in his rise to success.

### XXXII

#### **How Hereward overcame a certain very eminent knight in single combat.**

Once when Hereward was off on a journey across Brunneswold, he met with a certain Saxon soldier, a man of great courage and tall stature called Letold, who was well-known and highly praised in many regions for his skill and valor in war. Highly courteous as usual, Hereward promptly first wished him well, and then enquired his name, rank and family. Not taking his words and questions in good part, Letold answered haughtily, calling him a simpleton and peasant. So finally moved to anger, they came to blows. And not only they but their soldiers grappled at the same time — five on the side of the aforesaid knight and three on Hereward's side, namely: Gærwig, Wennoth, and Mæthelgar. As they fought, Gærwig soon laid low one soldier and turned to attack one of his comrades. Soon afterwards the other two also overcame their adversaries. Meanwhile, however, the aforesaid famous knight did not cease fighting with Hereward although his men were overcome. Nevertheless, Hereward would not allow any of his men to assist him, saying then as always when anyone was fighting with one of his men or with himself, that it was shameful for two to fight against one, and that a man ought to fight alone or else surrender. While these two continued to fight, the result of the combat between them being in doubt for some time, Hereward's sword unexpectedly broke off at the hilt, whereupon hesitating for a moment he stumbled over a helmet, the other standing thunderstruck. Immediately one of his soldiers, Gærwig, speaking in a friendly manner, asked him if he had forgotten what he had close by his side for such an emergency, adding that he wished Hereward would let him take over his place in the fight. Greatly encouraged by this, Hereward drew from its sheath a second sword which he had forgotten, and attacked his opponent more vigorously. And at the first blow, while feigning an attack on the head, he struck the man in the middle of his thigh. Still the soldier defended himself for some time on his knees, declaring that for as long as there was life in him he would never be willing to surrender or look beaten. Admiring which, Hereward praised his bravery and courage and stopped attacking him, leaving him and going on his way. And talking further about him to his men, he said: "I've never found such a man, nor did I ever meet with his equal in courage! Nor have I ever been in such danger when fighting anybody, nor had so much difficulty in conquering anyone."

*Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

XXXIII

**How Hereward went to the king's court with his soldiers.**

He was making his way to the king's court with these three men, but when at length he approached, he reflected that it would not be a distinguished way to meet the king, and immediately retraced his steps. And on his return he brought with him forty other most distinguished soldiers, all very big and tall in stature and proficient in warfare, and remarkable for their mere appearance and equipment in arms, if nothing else. He and his men were received by the king with great kindness and honor. However, the king would not allow Hereward's band to stay along with his courtiers, but gave instructions for them to be entertained at the next town, lest by chance any disturbance should break out between them and his own men. Nevertheless he took Hereward with just three soldiers into the palace, so as to deal the next day with his proposal. On the following day, however, the revered king himself went to see Hereward's soldiers and had them stand and march before him, both armed and unarmed. And he was greatly delighted with them and praised them, complimenting their handsome appearance and stature, and added that they ought all to be really very distinguished in warfare. After this, however, Hereward allowed them all to go home, except for two soldiers in addition to those already with him. And after having paid homage to the king, Hereward waited to receive his father's estate undiminished.

XXXIV

**How he fought with a soldier of the king's court, and overcame him.**

Now some of the king's soldiers at court, indignant at this, felt aggrieved that strangers and enemies should suddenly have come into favor with the king's majesty like this, and attempted to do him some harm. In fact they had a discussion in secret with a certain very eminent soldier of their company called Ogga, and arranged that he should challenge Hereward to single combat, knowing that he could not keep his hands off anyone if impudently or haughtily provoked to a fight or test of courage. They were afraid to raise a hand against him in the presence of the king, but reckoned to get some remedy for their jealousy even if he refused, for they were optimistic that he would be beaten by such a soldier, since he was taller than Hereward and seemed very much stronger just from the look in his eyes. And so they incited this man against Hereward, as though he had been insulted. And he was to do it secretly, lest it should become known to the king before the combat took place. After being repeatedly abused, Hereward eventually consented. So they directly went some distance away to a woodland, together with just three companions on either side under agreement on oath that nobody should assist either of them but just

## *Hereward the Wake*

stand by in case they wished for a truce or should prefer to fight it out. Thus they grappled and fought for a long time. Meanwhile, Hereward repeatedly urged him to desist from the attempt, pointing out that it was a very stupid thing to do to go on fighting the whole day long for nothing. The soldier paid no attention to his words, but instead became more confident of himself, assuming that Hereward kept harping on this out of fear or feebleness of body, and resolving rather to see him defeated. And so he attacked him increasingly; at which Hereward over and over again gave way, so that the vain hope constantly deceived him. But finally unwilling to put up with this, Hereward made a stand. And as it was his custom in tournament and battle always to fight to a finish like a man, he stood bravely against him and did not stop until he had conquered him, his own right arm being seriously wounded.

### XXXV

#### **How Hereward was accused by Robert de Horepol and put into prison.**

When therefore these things came to the notice of certain of his enemies, jealous of his success, they came to court and made many false reports about him to the king, and deceitfully urged him not to have near him such men any longer, traitors and enemies of his realm; just so they ought neither to be received at his court nor afforded a truce, but ought rather to be handed over to punishment or else be kept in perpetual imprisonment. The revered king did not take much notice of these words; nevertheless, in order to satisfy them, he gave orders for him to be taken into custody within the hour, making him over to a certain respected man, Robert de Horepol, at Bedford, where he remained for nearly a whole year, merely bound with fetters. But the Earl de Warenne and Robert Malet and Ivo de Taillebois remained hostile to him, dissuading the king from setting him free from custody, declaring that it was because of him that the country was not pacified. When they heard about this, Hereward's men dispersed. Nevertheless, they often sent in disguise to their lord a certain clerk of his called Leofric the Deacon, who was always astute in all his doings, and able to feign foolishness in place of learning — and cleverly so. On one occasion there went with him Utlah the cook, a man who was cautious at all points yet very witty at the expense of the foreigners. In the presence of these men one day, Hereward's aforementioned warder, pitying him together with the rest, exclaimed: "Alas, alas! Soon now, through the machinations of Ivo de Taillebois, this man once renowned for hosts of soldiers and the leader and lord of so many very eminent men, is to be taken from here and delivered into the hands of a detestable man and sent to the castle of Rockingham. Would that those whom he formerly enriched with gifts and raised with honors, or who were on the Isle, would follow the tracks of their master and intercept us en route, so as to set their lord and master free!" Hearing this, and after

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

receiving signs from their lord, Hereward's two men described what they had heard to his soldiers and all his men. So having secretly reconnoitered a forest through which the convoy would have to pass, they picked out a place and all assembled there on the day it was due to arrive. Upon their arrival, Hereward's men immediately rushed on them by surprise, overthrowing many of them before they could even take up their light arms. When they had recovered their arms, however, they resisted bravely, for there were a lot of them — in fact all of the soldiers from the castles round about. In the end it nearly proved the death of all of these; for when they could escape they wouldn't, and yet in the end they couldn't be seized. And then from the midst of several of them who still survived, Hereward shouted out that they should be careful not to injure the troops of his respected warder, and that Robert himself with his men should be allowed to go unharmed. Being set free from ten chains, Hereward moved here and there among those of his men who were still fighting, declaring that Robert had saved his life, so they immediately ceased from the pursuit. On the march Robert's men had come last, forming a rearguard, while Hereward was led in chains in the midst of those in front. At last his aforesaid warder wished to leave together with those of his comrades who survived, and Hereward returned him repeated thanks, for he had kept him in custody with courtesy and carefully treated him with honor. And Hereward asked Robert to make representations on his behalf to the lord king.

### XXXVI

#### **How Robert of Horepol made a good report of Hereward to the king.**

After this the aforesaid Robert de Horepol immediately went to the court of the king, informing him of everything that had taken place, and how Hereward's men had set him free. Finally, he added the request he had carried: that Hereward might avail himself of the king's clemency, remembering how he had come to his court under his protection and safe-conduct, and has thus been unjustly put in prison and under custody. However, if the king would even now carry out what he had then promised him, Hereward would in every way serve his most dear lord, knowing that this injury had not been perpetrated by him but through the persuasion and machinations of enemies. After reflecting on these words a little, the revered king replied that Hereward had not been justly treated. And when Robert realized that the king had taken his words well, he promptly recounted to the king many commendable things about Hereward and his men, adding that such a warrior in whom there might be found great sincerity and fidelity, ought not to be lightly banished from him and from his realm for so trivial a reason. And he declared that if there was any new disturbance in the country, Hereward would certainly prefer to rely on his former resources unless he could find favor rather than servitude in the king's eyes, and should in the king's kindness receive back his father's estates. At this the king instantly said that

### *Hereward the Wake*

he ought by rights to have it, giving a document addressed to Hereward and the men of the district stating that he was to receive his father's estate and enjoy quiet possession of it; but if he wished to retain the king's friendship hereafter, he must henceforth be willing to pursue peace rather than folly.

And so Hereward, the famous knight, tried and known in many places, was received into favor by the king. And with his father's land and possessions he lived on for many years faithfully serving King William and devotedly reconciled to his compatriots and friends. And thus in the end rested in peace, upon whose soul may God have mercy.



## **From *Eustache the Monk***

### ***Introduction***

Written in Old French, with traces of the Picard dialect, *Eustache the Monk* survives in a unique text, now Bibliothèque Nationale fonds française 1553 (fols. 325v–338v), dated 1284. The anonymous poet, who composed the 2307 verses in rhymed couplets, wrote the work between 1223 and 1284 (Conlon, pp. 10–11).

Both *Eustache the Monk* and *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, the final selections in this section, are set in the historical time of King Richard I, King John, and King Philip Augustus of France. Because an awareness of the historical background is vital to an understanding of both works, we have included the following brief summary of the important events.

- 1199   Richard I dies leaving no male heir. Contenders for the succession are Arthur, son of Richard's eldest brother Geoffrey, and Prince John. John's claim is supported by Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, the English barons, and his mother, the powerful Eleanor of Aquitaine. Arthur's claim is supported by King Philip Augustus of France, who sees an opportunity to expand the Capetian empire into Angevin territory in France.

When John is crowned in Westminster on 27 May 1199, he faces three major conflicts during his seventeen-year reign: war with France, excommunication by the Pope, and rebellion of the English barons.

- 1200   John divorces his childless first wife, Isabel of Gloucester, and marries Isabel, daughter of the Count of Angouleme, then twelve years old and already betrothed to Hugh Lusignan, a baron of Aquitaine. When Lusignan lodges a complaint with Philip Augustus, the king issues a formal summons ordering John to appear before his court. When John refuses to appear, Philip seizes the opportunity to declare John's fiefs — Normandy, Anjou, Maine, and Touraine — forfeit. To add insult to injury, Philip gives Arthur all of the Angevin fiefs except Normandy and betroths him to his daughter Mary.

### *Eustache the Monk*

- 1204 John withdraws from France after the disappearance and murder of his nephew Arthur in 1203.
- 1207 John invades and captures Poitou. A truce is made.
- 1208 Pope Innocent III declares an interdict against John for disobeying his order to install Stephen of Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury and for imposing a new tax on the clergy. John responded by confiscating the property of the clergy who obeyed the interdict.
- 1212 King John forms an alliance with the Count of Boulogne, Otto IV of Germany, and Ferdinand of Portugal with the aim of fighting Philip Augustus, but the plan is abandoned due to lack of baronial support and rebellion in Wales.
- 1213 Pope Innocent III authorizes Philip to invade England, and Philip assembles a large army and fleet of 1500 ships. John responds by calling out the feudal levies and all ships capable of carrying six horses. The invasion is averted when John agreed to the Pope's conditions — Stephen Langton is accepted as the Archbishop of Canterbury and all the exiled clergy are reinstated. In addition, John cedes overlordship of England to the Pope in order to win his protection from his disaffected barons. King Philip, disgusted at the outcome, burns his own fleet.
- 1214 King John invades France with a large army, recaptures Poitou and Angouleme, defeats the Lusignans, and occupies Angers, capital of Anjou. The victories are short-lived as John's coalition of forces — Otto IV, the Counts of Flanders, Boulogne, Holland, Brabant, and Limburg, and the Duke of Lorraine — are soundly defeated at the battle of Bouvines. John returns to England with ruined schemes to face his unpopularity among the northern barons.
- 1215 Although John accepts the articles of Magna Carta on June 15, he has no intention of honoring them. Instead, he prepares for war against the barons.
- 1216 The barons successfully negotiate with Louis of France, Philip's son, promising him the English throne if he will help depose John. Louis lands in England and advances to London, while John, ill from dysentery,

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

retreats to the west. When John dies, the barons choose young Henry III, and Louis returns to France.

Like *Hereward the Wake* and *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, *Eustache the Monk* is based on the life of an actual person, Eustache Busket, who lived from c. 1170 to 1217. But the poet transformed Busket's life into the stuff of legend and folklore. While it may be impossible to separate fact from fancy, the following summary, drawn from Conlon's French introduction, pp. 14–19, represents a brief biography of Eustache.

- c. 1170 Born at Courset in the district of Boulogne, he entered the Abbey of Saint Samer as a monk.
- 1190 After his father, Baudoin Busket, peer of the Boulonnais province, was ambushed and killed, Eustache left religious orders to demand justice from the Count of Boulogne, Renaud of Dammartin. To settle the dispute, a judicial duel was arranged and Eustache's champion was killed.
- 1200 Eustache is appointed seneschal of the Count of Boulogne during his expedition with King Philip Augustus to reclaim territories held by King John of England. Upon his return in 1203, Eustache was accused of mismanaging the Count's financial affairs. Suspecting treachery, Eustache fled into the forest surrounding Boulogne, and the Count retaliated by confiscating his properties.
- 1205 King John orders the port bailiffs to help a William Little recover his ship captured by Eustache, who has been roving the English Channel as a pirate. As a mercenary mariner, he enters the service of King John, who gave him ships to wage war against King Philip.
- 1209 Still in the service of King John, Eustache witnesses the signing of a charter in Boulogne as an English ambassador to the Count of Boulogne. When the Count learns of his visit, he outlaws him.
- 1212 Now in London, Eustache witnesses a charter of allegiance between Count Renaud and King John. Again suspecting foul play, Eustache switches sides and joins forces with King Philip.

### *Eustache the Monk*

- 1213 In support of the northern English barons attempting to depose King John, King Philip prepares for the invasion of England on May 10, but when the Pope lifts the excommunication of John, he hesitates, and his ships are attacked and destroyed by John's navy at Damne. Eustache loses the *nef de Boulogne*, a huge ship in the shape of a castle.
- 1214 Eustache supplies arms to the northern barons rebelling against King John.
- 1215 Eustache and his navy control the English Channel. King Philip warns a papal legate not to cross the Channel.
- 1216 In May, 800 ships of Louis, Philip's son, leave for England in order to help the barons depose John. When Louis disembarks from Eustache's ship on the Isle of Thanet, he learns of the death of King John and the barons' decision to choose young Henry III as king. On August 24, Eustache's ship is surrounded by four English ships, and he is captured and beheaded on the spot. Louis eventually withdraws from England and a peace treaty is signed on September 11.

To this substratum of bare historical fact, the poet has added a rich layer of fantastic exploits and adventures, derived from the popular romances, *chanson de geste*, and fabliaux of the day. Among these works, the influence of the *Romance of Reynard the Fox* or *Roman de Renart* is, as we will see, particularly strong. After completing his apprenticeship as a sorcerer in Toledo, Spain, Eustache sets out for the monastery of Saint Samer with his companions. While in Monferrant he gets into a fight in a tavern and casts a magic spell, causing the tavern-keeper and her customers to strip off their clothing, straddle the wine casks, and engage in a bawdy feast. Next, Eustache casts a spell on a cart-driver, making the cart and horse go backwards rather than forwards. Once he arrives at the monastery, he creates mayhem by casting more spells: the monks fast when they should eat; they go barefoot when they should wear shoes; and they swear when they should remain silent. He then turns a side of bacon into an ugly old woman, terrifying the cook. Finally, he gambles away in a tavern the crucifixes, statues, and books of the monastery.

Upon learning of his father's death, Eustache leaves the monastery to demand justice from the Count. When his champion is killed in the judicial duel, Eustache burns the Count's windmills and is outlawed. Fleeing into the forest of Hardelot, he begins a career as a trickster outlaw. In a series of adventures designed to revenge himself on the Count, Eustache uses various disguises in order to harass, embarrass,

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

and rob the Count: a monk, a shepherd, a pilgrim, a coal-man, a potter, a prostitute, a *villein*, a leper, a fish-merchant, and a baker. In this second set of episodes, Eustache no longer resorts to magic spells but to trickery and deception instead. These “slapstick” adventures owe much to the spirit if not the substance of the popular Reynard the Fox stories. To avoid execution by hanging in Branch I, for instance, Reynard promises to go on a pilgrimage across the sea, and he dons the pilgrim’s scrip and staff (Owen, p. 25). In Branch Ib, after Reynard is outlawed by King Noble, he prays to God to provide him “with such a disguise that no beast who sees me may be able to tell who I am.” His prayer is answered when he falls into a tub of yellow dye at a dyer’s house: “it’s made me a shining yellow,” he says, and “I’ll never again be recognized wherever I’ve been seen before” (Owen, pp. 38–39). Other impersonations include a fiddler (p. 41), a monk (pp. 128–29), and a physician (p. 199). Another compelling link is found in Branch XI, *Renart Empereur*, which was composed between 1196 and 1200 — the precise historical time depicted in *Eustache the Monk*. In this story Reynard plays the role of a “baron, féodal, grand seigneur, hardi, ambitieux, brutal et sans scruples, qui conspire à usurper la place de son monarque absent” (Flinn, p. 99). Ernest Martin, cited in Flinn, opines that the poem was inspired by the conduct of Prince John during the absence of King Richard and King Philip Augustus on the Third Crusade. The Reynard role is thus played by Prince John. It seems reasonable to conclude that the *Eustache* poet, recognizing the political allegory in Branch XI, adapted it as well as the trickster motifs for use in his poem.

### **Relation to Robin Hood Legends**

In assessing the relationships between *Eustache the Monk* and the Robin Hood legend, we need to consider their similarities and differences, their dates, and their opportunities for contact. Beyond the obvious shared features — both are outlaws living in the forest, venturing out to punish and humiliate the Count of Boulogne and the Sheriff of Nottingham — there are also a number of episodes too similar to be accounted for by coincidence or common tradition. In the first pair of scenes, the count and the sheriff come face to face with the outlaw leader in the forest. In lines 776–853, Eustache, disguised as a pilgrim, tricks the count into the woods where he captures him. Eustache offers to make peace with his adversary, but the count refuses and is released unharmed. In the *Gest*, lines 722–817, Little John, disguised as Reynolde Greenelef, meets the sheriff in the forest and lures him into Robin’s camp by promising him a “ryght fayre harte,” who of course turns out to be Robin “the mayster-herte.” Once he is fed, the sheriff asks to be released, and after swearing an

### *Eustache the Monk*

oath that he will not harm Robin or his men, he is let go. In the next pair of episodes, the waylaid victims who tell the truth are allowed to keep their money. In lines 930–54, Eustache meets a merchant from Boulogne and asks him how much money he has. The merchant answers truthfully that he has forty pounds and fifteen sous. Upon counting the money and discovering that he is telling the truth, Eustache returns the full amount and lets the merchant go unharmed. In the *Gest*, lines 145 ff., after the impoverished knight dines with Robin in the forest, he is asked to pay for the meal, and when the knight truthfully replies that he has only ten shillings, he is rewarded many times over. However, in another pair of scenes, when the victims — both ecclesiastics — lie about the money they are carrying, they are severely dealt with. For example, in lines 1746–77, Eustache confronts the Abbot of Jumièges on the road and asks how much money he has; the abbot replies untruthfully that he has only four silver marks. When Eustache discovers thirty marks on his person, he keeps twenty-six marks and returns four. As we have already seen, Eustache and Robin Hood are masters of trickery and disguise. In order to fool the count, Eustache, in lines 996–1141, disguises himself first as a coal-man and then a potter. When the count meets the potter, he is crying “Pots for sale!” and tricks the count into believing that the coal-man, with whom he has switched identities, is really Eustache the Monk. Similarly, in *Robin Hood and the Potter*, Robin assumes the identity of the potter when he goes into Nottingham to spy on the sheriff.

Although J. C. Holt admits that “some of the analogous material must have been transmitted, by confusion of memory or literary borrowing, from one tale to the other,” he concludes that “the ballads are not bred in simple fashion from the romances” (Holt, 1989, pp. 64–66). Maurice Keen, after detailing the parallel passages described above, asserts that the romances “cannot be said to be much of an anticipation of the ballads of Robin Hood, except as regards isolated incidents” (Keen, 1987, p. 59). In stressing the differences between *Eustache the Monk* and the Robin Hood ballads, Holt and Keen seem to deny the ability of the English poets to adapt creatively characters and plot situations from their sources. It should be recalled too that the Anglo-Norman community in England was bilingual, and, consequently, stories could be easily translated from one language to another. Finally, when Holt (p. 65) claims that the restoration of a lost inheritance plays a fundamental role in *Hereward the Wake*, *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, and *Eustache the Monk*, he neglects to mention that this too is a central theme in *Gamelyn*, an early outlaw tale in Middle English, and in later Tudor dramas, such as Munday’s *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington*.

The following excerpts from *Eustache the Monk* were translated from Denis Conlon’s French edition, *Li Romans de Witasse le Moine*, by Thomas E. Kelly especially for this volume.

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

### **Translator's Note**

As for the title character of the romance, it should be noted that the Monk's name has been normalized in English to the spelling "Eustache." The manuscript used for the translation has a number of variant spellings in Old French: *Witasse/Wistace/Wistasces*, and *Uistasces/Uistasses*.

The original text is composed in octosyllabic rhymed couplets, the same verse form used by Chrétien de Troyes in his romances. The form lends itself to a fast-paced narrative style which is difficult to render into modern English prose. Also lost in translation is the sharp wit of a storyteller who never lets up on his word play, especially puns and double-entendre. The word *conte*, for example, lends itself to frequent semantic shifts from the *tale* itself to the *Count* of Boulogne, to the settling of Eustache's *accounts* with the Count. In the passage where Eustache disguises himself as a leper (lines 1366-1422), the author delights in frequent puns on the various meanings of *tour/retour*: "retraced tracks," "turn," "turn about," "turn" = trick/disguise — which are impossible to convey in an English prose translation. The present translation has the modest objective of rendering as accurately as possible only the content of the narrative details, without attempting to focus the reader's attention on stylistic or linguistic nuances: *traduttore = traditore!*

### **Select Bibliography**

#### **Editions and Translations**

Burgess, Glyn S., trans. *Two Medieval Outlaws: Eustace the Monk and Fouke Fitz Waryn*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997. Pp. 3-87.

Conlon, Denis Joseph, ed. *Li Romans de Witasse Le Moine: Roman de treizième siècle*. Édité d'après le manuscrit, Fonds Français 1553, de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. University of North Carolina Studies in Romance Languages and Literatures, Number 126. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972.

Dufournet, Jean, ed. *Le Roman de Renard*. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1970.

Kelly, Thomas E., trans. *Eustache the Monk*. In *Medieval Outlaws: Ten Tales in Modern English*. Ed. Thomas H. Ohlgren. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998. Pp. 61-98, 299-302.

### *Eustache the Monk*

Owen, D. D., trans. *The Romance of Reynard the Fox*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

#### **Commentary and Criticism**

Flinn, John. *Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature Française et dans les littératures étrangères au Moyen Age*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963.

Holt, J. C. *Robin Hood: Revised and Enlarged Edition*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1989.

Keen, Maurice. *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*. Revised paperback edition. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.



## **From *Eustache the Monk***

### **1. How Eustace becomes an outlaw**

**Summary:** Hainfrois de Hersinguehans plots with the Count and sets him against his Seneschal (Eustache). When he is summoned to give an account of his bailliage Eustache takes flight. When he learns that the Count has confiscated all his possessions the Seneschal sets fire to two mills in Boulogne. In spite of all the Count's efforts to capture him, Eustache succeeds in escaping.

Translation (lines 373–429):

The Monk was in the service of the Count of Boulogne and rendered to him an accounting in all matters. He was Seneschal of the Boulonnais, peer and bailiff — that was his duty and rank. Hainfrois [of Hersinguehans] spoke ill of him to the Count and plotted against him. As a result, the Count quickly lost confidence in his Seneschal. The Count sent for Eustache immediately and asked him for an accounting of his stewardship as bailiff. Without delay Eustache said: “I stand ready to give an accounting, because you have summoned me here in the presence of your lords and barons. For I too am one of the peers of the Boulonnais.” And the Count replied: “You are hereby summoned to Hardelot, where you will give a formal accounting of your service. For there you will be unable to deceive me.” Eustache answered: “That is treason! You merely want an excuse to have me put me into prison.”

The Monk took flight immediately and with great difficulty escaped from the Count. Many times since then he had cause to lament his having to flee thus. The Count seized all of Eustache’s possessions and burned his fields. Eustache the Monk swore that the Count would live to regret burning his fields; it would cost him 990 gold marks. One day Eustache came upon two mills which the Count had built just outside the city of Boulogne and which were unguarded. In one of the mills, Eustache found a miller and threatened to cut off his head unless he accepted to go to the city where they were celebrating Simon of Boulogne’s wedding feast.

The miller was instructed thus: “When you get there you shall say that Eustache the Monk has come to enlighten them, for they lack enough light to see what they are eating. I will set fire to the Count’s two mills which will be like two candles to light up the festivities.” The miller sets off and, as instructed, gives the message to the Count.

## *Eustache the Monk*

Without delay the Count leaps up from the table where he was sitting, and has great difficulty shouting instructions: "Eustache the Monk . . . , everyone . . . , after him!" The mayor and the provost come forth and immediately have the bell sounded to signal Eustache's banishment as an outlaw. When Eustache hears the bell ring he begins his flight. The Count's men begin the chase but can't catch him. On the wedding feast of Simon of Boulogne Eustache set fire to the two mills you heard about earlier. And that's the honest truth!

### **2. How Eustache is betrayed by one of his men.**

**Summary:** The Count pursues Eustache throughout the forest of Hardelot. One of Eustache's watchmen offers to deliver his master into the Count's hands. Unfortunately for him, a second watchman witnesses the treason and reports it to Eustache. When the traitor arrives Eustache kills him on the spot. Shortly thereafter the Count arrives, again too late to capture Eustache, but two of his sergeants are seized. In a fit of anger the Count puts out the two men's eyes.

Translation (lines 660-741):

The Count continued his relentless pursuit of Eustache. He followed him into the forest of Hardelot, pursuing in all directions. Eustache had two watchmen posted in the forest. Day and night the two men were on watch, never taking any rest. The two young men had been well taken care of by the Monk, who had raised them since childhood. One day, as the Count continued his hunt for Eustache, one of the two young men came before him. "Sire," said he, "how much will you give me if I deliver my lord to you? For I am Eustache the Monk's man." "In truth," said the Count of Boulogne, "if you deliver him to me you will do well, and I will make you a young gentleman at my court." "Sire, at this moment he is sitting at table eating his meal. If you follow me I will show you where you can capture him." "Go," said the Count, "I will follow you at a safe distance, but be careful he does not suspect anything. I fear lest he deceive you." The second watchman overheard the first and immediately sensed treason. His comrade had betrayed his lord, biting the very hand that had fed him. In due haste he came to Eustache and told him that the other had sold out to the Count. Eustache said: "You may take your leave, but as soon as my other watchman arrives to betray and deceive me I will give him the garrote, for he has served me ill." The young watchman left Eustache just as his former companion arrived to hear Eustache say: "It would do you well to cut this willow branch for me." "Willingly, Sire," said the boy as he cut the sapling. "Twist it well and make a cord out of it." The young man very fearfully twisted the strip of willow, after

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

which Eustache put it around his neck and pulled it tight. "God have mercy," said the boy. "Sire, why do you want me hanged? Could you not wait until I have had chance to go to confession?" Eustache replied: "You have taken great pleasure in doing evil, but you see I am well informed about that. You have fallen into evil hands, thinking you could have me wait here long enough for the Count to capture me. I have little time to spare for your confession of sins. Up there on the tree you will have time enough to talk to God. In fact, when you climb high up on that tree you'll be closer to God for your chat. So go ahead, climb up there and tell me how you sold me out to the Count." "Sire," said he, "by Saint Remi I did in fact sell you out and betrayed you. But tell me first, who in the devil told you I did it? Now there will be no man to kill you, but you would do well to leave immediately and not tarry here any longer." Eustache answered: "I will not delay seeing you hanged, so climb up there and we'll get the job done." The young traitor climbed up quickly into the tree and was hanged with the rope he had himself prepared. Soon after, the Count arrived, spurring on his horse. As he remounted Moriel, his own horse, Eustache saw the Count coming after him and declared: "Sire, since I have no one else to watch over him, I will depart, leaving this hanged man, my former watchman, in your care." The Count, like a mad man, along with his troops quickly chased after Eustache. They succeeded only in stopping two of the Monk's sergeants. Their first reaction, in a fit of anger, was to gouge out the two men's eyes. When Eustache received news of the deed, he swore an oath by the Holy Virgin that in retaliation for the four eyes put out, he in turn would maim four of the Count's men by cutting off their feet.

### **3. Capture and release of Sheriff / Count of Boulogne**

**Summary:** Eustache leads the Count of Boulogne and seven of his knights into an ambush set by thirty of Eustache's men. Eustache seeks a reconciliation; but the Count, after contemptuously rejecting the offer of a settlement, is given a safe-conduct.

Translation (lines 776–853):

One day as he went wandering through the forest Eustache the Monk put on a hair-shirt and a rough homespun pilgrim's cloak. Thus woefully dressed, he came upon twenty knights along the way. He greeted them simply, and they in turn responded joyfully: "Say, where are you coming from, and where are you going?" "My Lords, I'm coming from Boulogne and am on my way at this very moment to see Count Dammartin to lodge a claim against a bad monk. He says he has a feud with the Count and has stolen a hundred marks from me in this very country. The man is a scurilous mendicant who refuses to give me even a piece of his bread in the morning or at supper. My Lords, tell me without

### *Eustache the Monk*

delay where I might find the Count." One of the knights replied: "At Hardelot. Go there, on my advice." Eustache set off for Hardelot and, arriving at mealtime, exclaimed to one of the Count's men: "In God's name I seek justice against this devil! My good sir, which one is the Count of Boulogne?" The man answered: "There he is." Forthwith the Monk went up to the Count. "Sir," he said, "may God have mercy! I am a bourgeois from Les Andelys. On my way from Bruges in Flanders I was carrying fine woollen breeches and a sum of money, some thirty pounds, when a drunken dim-wit (he was tonsured like a priest, but looked too much like a monk to be truly one; he also said he was your sworn enemy), robbed me of all my gold and silver, my furs; he even took my horse and cloak. I beg you. Do me justice against this mad monk. He is nearby, not far from where we are standing." (He was telling the truth, since it was in fact he who was talking to the Count.) "This false monk, son of a bitch, had me put on this pilgrim's cloak and made me swear that I would come to speak with you. You should know he is not far from here. As a matter of fact, I saw the spot where he went into the woods." The Count asked: "What does the man look like? Is he black or white, tall or short?" "About my height," said Eustache. The Count leaped forward immediately, shouting: "Quick, take me to the spot, and you will have your revenge." Eustache said: "Come on. I'll turn him over to you, and you can take him prisoner." The Count, accompanied by seven of his men, followed Eustache, who had thirty of his own men with him. As Eustache led the Count off, the latter became wary, surrounded as he was by Eustache's band. The Count became frightened. "Don't be scared," said Eustache. "I seek only reconciliation. By God's mercy, my sweet lord, let's talk peace." But the Count replied sarcastically: "Leave me alone in peace! It's all for naught, the die is cast. Our differences can never be reconciled. Eustache responded: "Go then, since things cannot be otherwise. You came here in my safe-conduct, and no harm will come to you." The Count returned home, and Eustache went off on another path.

#### **4. Those who "tell the truth" allowed to keep their money.**

Summary: Eustache meets a merchant from Boulogne and demands his money. The merchant swears that he has only forty pounds and fifteen sous. Eustache notes that the man is telling the truth, so he gives him back his purse.

Translation (lines 930-54):

One day as Eustache was wandering through the forest he met a merchant who was carrying forty pounds on his way home from Bruges in Flanders. The merchant was himself from Boulogne, so he recognized Eustache the Monk immediately. Knowing the

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

Monk's reputation he was obviously worried about the money he had on him. Eustache promptly asked: "Tell me, how much money do you have?" To which the merchant replied: "Sir, I tell you truthfully without a lie I have forty pounds in a belt and I also have fifteen sous in my purse." Eustache quickly took it from him and led the man into a thicket where he proceeded to Count all the money. He immediately gave the merchant back his money, saying: "Go! May God be with you! If you had in any way lied to me you would have left here without a cent. You would have lost all you have, keeping not even a penny." The merchant thanked him for his generosity.

### **5. Eustace entertains the Count for dinner and, disguised as a leper, steals his horse.**

Summary: Eustache and his men are preparing a meal in the forest. Inadvertently Hainfrois of Heresinguehains arrives in the enemy camp and is invited to dinner. Eustache forgives him for causing his father's death and sends him back to Count Renaut. The Count does an about turn and immediately comes upon a leper to whom he gives twenty-eight deniers. The leper returns the favor by stealing one of the horses.

Translation (lines 1366–1422):

Eustache and his men fled into the woods where they found a safe hiding place. One day, just as they were sitting down to eat, Hainfrois, Eustache's mortal enemy, inadvertently came upon their meal. He had gone into the woods to seek relief (piss/shit), but once there he thought he would never get out alive. As he sat there on his horse, frightened to death, Eustache stood up and said: "Well then, do dismount and join us for a meal." Hainfrois dismounted, fearing for his very life. Little did he trust Eustache. When the meal was over Hainfrois began to plead great mercy of Eustache. In reply the Monk said: "Get out of here! You killed my father and my cousin, bringing both to their end, not to mention the mess you have gotten me into with Count Renaut. But should anyone give me all of France I would not seek reconciliation with him. The same is not the case between you and me. Because you and I have eaten together, from this day forth you will have nothing to fear from me. For you and I take leave quits. As for the Count, you can tell him on my behalf that when — just a short time ago, while you and I were quenching our thirst together — you asked what direction he was planning to take, the Monk told you that he would stay put, in the forest right where he was." Hainfrois took leave of Eustache and ran to tell the Count what had happened. When the Count learned all that had been said, he immediately retraced his tracks, only to find that Eustache had taken still another turn.

Eustache next turned up in the guise of a leper carrying his bowl, along with a crutch

## *Eustache the Monk*

and a wooden rattle. As soon as he saw the Count approaching he began to shake the rattle, with the result that the Count and his knights put twenty-eight deniers into the poor beggar's bowl. The troop passed by, but one of the men riding a fine battle horse had the misfortune to remain alone in the rear. Eustache the leper tripped the animal, knocked the rider out of his saddle, and rode away. The horseless rider came to the Count and cried: "Sire, upon my word, a leper stole your horse from me." Furious, the Count cursed: "By bowels, belly and legs . . . the damn Monk tricked us once again. He was the leper that shook his rattle at us. Yet, upon my word," so says Count Renaut, "he really did look like a leper, with his fingers all bent over like claws and his face all pustulous." And so the Count continued his relentless pursuit of Eustache the Monk.

### **6. Robs those who fail to "tell the truth."**

**Summary:** Eustache comes upon the Abbot of Jumièges, threatens him and demands his purse. The Abbot says he only has four marks; but, when he opens the purse, Eustache finds thirty marks. He keeps twenty six and gives the Abbot back the four marks he said he had.

Translation (lines 1746–77):

Eustache spotted the Abbot of Jumièges as he was coming down the road. "Sir Abbot," he said, "stop where you are! What are you carrying? Come now, don't hide it." The Abbot answered: "What's it to you?" At this, Eustache was ready to hit him, but instead replied: "What's it to me, fat-ass [couillon = balls]? Upon my word, I'll make it my business. Get down, fast, and not another word out of you, or I'll let you have it. You'll be beaten up so badly you won't be worth a hundred pounds." The Abbot thought the man was drunk, and said, more politely this time: "Go away. You won't find what you are looking for here." Eustache responded: "Cut the bullshit and get off your horse fast, or you'll be in for a lot of trouble." The Abbot got down, frightened now. Eustache asked how much money he had with him. "Four marks," said the Abbot, "in truth I only have four marks silver." Eustache searched him immediately and found thirty marks or more. He gave back to the Abbot the four marks he claimed to have. The Abbot became duly furious; for, had he told the truth, he would have got back all his money. The Abbot lost his money only because he told a lie.

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

### **7. Disguise as a Potter.**

**Summary:** One of the Count of Boulogne's spies finds Eustache's hideout; he informs the Count who then sets an ambush in a ditch. When Eustache learns of the ambush from a watchman, he disguises himself as a coal-man. Shortly thereafter, Eustache comes face to face with the Count, telling him he is looking for the Count of Boulogne for the purpose of filing a grievance for damages against Eustache. The Count asks where he might find Eustache and goes after him. Eustache again changes identity, this time becoming a potter. The Count returns and inquires of the potter where he might now find the coalman. Eustache sends him down the road toward Boulogne, and the Count comes upon the real potter who had the misfortune to exchange his pottery for the donkey and coal of Eustache. This individual is seized and mistreated until finally recognized by one of the Count's men-at-arms. The Count retraces his steps, Eustache by this time having thrown off his disguise as a potter.

Translation (lines 996–1141):

One day the Count was out hunting. A spy came and told him that Eustache was in the forest. The Count put on his heavy brown cloak, and he and his men followed the spy on foot. They set up an ambush in a ditch. One of Eustache's watchmen approached the group and recognized the Count. He found Eustache and told him of the ambush. Eustache then approached a coal-man and his donkey. The coal-man's donkey was used to carry the coal to market. Without further ado, Eustache put on the coal-man's clothes and black hat. He smeared coal dust on his face and hands, as well as around his neck. As a result, he was marvelously blackened. The donkey's back was loaded with sacks of coal. Goad in hand, Eustache set off with the donkey toward Boulogne. Not recognizing his foe, the Count paid him no attention and didn't even deign to speak to him as he passed by. So Eustache shouted to them: "My lords," he said, "what are you doing there?" The Count was the first to answer: "What's it to you, you scurvy fellow?" Eustache replied: "By Saint Omer! I'll go lodge a formal complaint with the Count telling him how shamefully we are treated by Eustache the Monk. I dared not bring my draft horse to carry my coal to market for fear that Eustache might steal it. Right now he is lying comfortably next to a good coal fire eating meat and venison. He has burned all my coal and has already cost me plenty." "Is he nearby?" asked the Count. Eustache replied: "He is in this very forest. Go straight down this road if you want to talk to him." Eustache struck Romer (the donkey) with the goad as the Count and his men began to enter the forest. In the meantime, the real coal-man had found it appropriate to put on the monk's clothes. As a result, the poor man was mistaken for Eustache, beaten and mistreated. The Count's men had thought, without any doubt, that he was Eustache the

### *Eustache the Monk*

Monk. "My lords," said he, "why are you beating me so? You can have these clothes. Be advised I have no money; this is the robe of Eustache the Monk who at this moment is on his way toward Boulogne with my coal and my donkey. His hands, face and neck are well blackened with coal dust. He is also wearing my black cap. He made me take off my clothes and put on his." And the Count said: "Listen, my lords! Catch him if you can. By God's teeth, I have been burned by this living devil so many times! He was disguised as the coal-man who spoke to us just a short while ago on this very spot." The Count added: "Quick, after him!" The horses were nearby, so they mounted and rode off in haste after Eustache. Eustache had by that time washed his face before meeting a potter. The potter was shouting: "Pots for sale! Pots for sale!" And Eustache, who was no fool, knew he was being chased. So he immediately struck a deal with the potter; in exchange for his donkey and coal, he got pitchers, pots, and vases. The swap was made and so Eustache became a potter and the potter became a coal-man. The latter was a fool for giving up his own trade. Eustache went off shouting: "Pots for sale! Pots for sale!" Just at that moment the Count came out of the woods and asked the potter if he had seen a coal-man. "Sir," said Eustache the Monk, "he went down this road straight toward Boulogne, leading his donkey loaded with coal sacks." The Count dug in his spurs, and he, his servants, and knights caught up with the coal-man. They proceeded to beat and mistreat the poor man. Sorely did they strike him with their fists, while tying him up hands and feet. They then threw him over the back of a horse, with his head dangling over the animal's rump. The poor fellow screamed, shouted, and cried: "My Lords," said he, "in God's name, I beg you, have pity on me. Tell me why you have taken me thus; and, if I have done you any ill, I will willingly make amends." "Aha! Aha! sir scoundrel," said the Count, "you thought you could escape? I will soon have you hanged." One of the Count's knights looked closely at the man and recognized him as the potter whom he knew well. This wise knight, who knew where the man was born, said: "What devils have turned you into a coal-man? You used to be a potter; no man will ever stay healthy who takes on so many different trades." "My Lord, have mercy," said the man, "for this donkey and this coal I gave my pots to the coal-man. May God strike him down, the one by whose doing I am so sorely tried. I think he probably stole the goods; by God's name I can truly say I didn't steal anything. I gave him my pots in exchange for the donkey. He rode off in haste into the woods, shouting: 'Pots for sale! Pots for sale!'" The knight spoke to the Count in these words: "Eustache is a shameful fellow! Just a short while ago he was dressed as a coal-man, now he has become a potter." "So I see," said the Count, "by the pluck! Quick, after the man, let's go! Bring to me everyone you meet today and tomorrow. I'll never catch the Monk unless I take all of them." So they left the poor coal-man and set off into the forest, once again on the chase. By this time Eustache had gotten rid of all his pots, having thrown them into a swamp.

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

### **8. Disguise as a Prostitute.**

**Summary:** The Count sets up his court in Neuchatel. Eustache disguises himself as a prostitute. One of the Count's men (a sergeant) burns with passion for this slut in the forest, but he is quickly disabused of his desire after he loses his two horses. Eustache orders him back to tell the Count what happened, but the sergeant's shame is so great that he does not dare return to his master. Instead he prefers flight from the Boulonnais region.

Translation (lines 1186-1283):

The Count goes to Neuchatel where he sets up his new court. Eustache, who had many tricks up his sleeve, entered after him into the city. He dressed up in a woman's clothing, and his disguise was so good he did in fact look just like a woman. He put on a linen dress, covered his face with a veil, and carried a distaff by his side. As he sat there spinning, a sergeant arrived almost immediately, riding one of the Count's horses and leading another. Eustache exclaimed: "Let me mount your horse and in return I will let you fuck me." "Quite willingly," said the sergeant. "Climb up, then, on this good ambling palfrey, and I'll give you four-pence if you let me fuck you. I will also teach you how to ass-play." In reply Eustache said: "Here and now, I declare, never has any man screwed thus." Eustache lifts a leg to the horseman; and, as he does so, lets off a loud fart. "Hah, damsel, you fart!" Eustache responds: "You are mistaken, sweet handsome friend, don't let it bother you, but it's only the noise of the saddle cracking." Eustache the Monk climbs up on the second horse, and he and the sergeant ride off in haste into the forest side by side. "Let's not go any farther. I am riding my master's horse, and you have his best palfrey." The sergeant added: "I will have great shame if this affair of ours is not quickly finished." "Sergeant," said Eustache the Monk, "I too am all desirous to fuck. So let's get to our ass-playing quickly. Come a little closer so that no one can spy on us." "Damsel," said the sergeant, "be careful there is no trickery. Should there be such, I swear by Saint Mary's bowels I would take your life." In reply Eustache said: "My dear friend, no need to get so upset, my lodge is just ahead. Come, just a bit farther now." The sergeant foolishly follows along as Eustache comes upon his own band of men. He seizes the poor wretch by the scruff of the neck as if he were mad. Here you have a good illustration of the truth in the popular saying: "Thus scratches a trapped goat when ill befalls it." Eustache ordered: "Get down off the good horse. You won't ride it any farther. The palfrey too will stay here quite well. The Count will never again mount it." Both riders dismount there amid great bursts of laughter. "My lords," said Eustache the Monk, "this sergeant will do his duty, for I have his word." He leads the poor man forward a bit, and takes him to a mud-pit. "Sergeant," he says, "don't let it trouble you.

## *Eustache the Monk*

Quick, strip off all your clothes. I know how anxious you are to have a fuck." The sergeant enters the mud-pit for he dares not contradict Eustache. The latter exclaims: "Now, about that ass-play! You can fuck at your leisure, all stretched out for some good ass-play, or you will be beaten so badly you'll never be able to leave. You thought you would fuck me. Aren't you ashamed for wanting to bugger a black monk?" The sergeant replied: "May God have mercy, do not put me to such shame here. Sire, by Our Lady, I thought you were a woman!" Eustache (who was neither heretic nor bugger, nor sodomite), answered: "Well then, come forward before you leave. You are to tell the Count on my behalf how I used you." "I will tell him straight away on your behalf," so says the sergeant as he sets off immediately. In fact, his shame was such that he dared not return to tell the Count anything of what had happened to him. Instead, he left the Boulonnais for a foreign land, never to return. Following this episode, the war between Eustache the Monk and the Count lasted a long time. Eustache continued to put his adversary to even greater shame.

### **9. Eustace invades England.**

Summary: Eustache serves the King of France well, accompanying Prince Louis to England. Yet he is suspected of complicity in the defeat of the combat fleet assembled at Damme by Louis-Philippe. There is, however, none courageous enough to charge him with responsibility for the defeat.

Translation (lines 2250–65):

The Monk was a fine warrior; he was bold and proud, and on the other hand did many devilish things on the islands. He led King Louis and his large fleet across the sea, personally capturing the Nef de Boulogne. He took the French King with him to the port of Damme. That was the year [1213 A.D.] the King lost his ships! They blamed Eustache for having betrayed the King's fleet. Eustache justified himself by claiming there was no man bold enough to furnish proof of such treason. And so they left him alone after that.

### **10. The Death of Eustace.**

Summary: Eustache sets out to sea again to wage battle against twenty English ships. A violent combat ensues during which the English set up a curtain of smoke before

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

boarding Eustache's vessel. They cut off Eustache's head and the battle is lost (2266–2305). The romance ends with a moralizing comment of the life of Eustache (2306–07).

Translation (lines 2266–2307):

Once again he set out to sea in a great fleet of ships. With him there was Robert de Tornelle, along with Varles de Montagui. When Eustache, the courageous warrior, got out on the high seas he soon encountered more than twenty English ships bearing down on him. The enemy set out in skiffs and attacked the ships with long bows and cross bows. The Monk's men guard themselves against everything thrown at them in the chase. They kill many Englishmen and defend themselves nobly. Eustache himself crushed many with the oar he wielded, breaking arms and legs with every swing. This one he killed, another one he threw overboard. This one he knocks down, another he tramples under foot, and a third one has his wind-pipe crushed. But Eustache is assailed from all directions. Battle axes strike his ship on all sides. On the first wave the defenders were able to ward off the attack, preventing the enemy from coming on board. Then the English started hurling big pots of finely ground lime on board, with the result that great clouds of dust covered the decks. That was what caused the most damage, against which Eustache's men could not defend themselves. To their misfortune the wind was against them, which caused further torment, for their eyes became filled with ash. In the confusion the English leaped onto Eustache's ship and mistreated his men badly, taking all the nobles prisoner. As for Eustache the Monk, he was slain, his head cut off. Thus ended the battle.

"No man can live long who spends his days doing ill."



## **From *Fouke le Fitz Waryn***

### ***Introduction***

The story, written in Old French prose, survives in a miscellany of works in Latin, French, and English, dating from c. 1325–40. The manuscript, now British Library, Royal 12.C.XII, contains some sixty pieces, ranging from liturgical texts in honor of Thomas of Lancaster, parodies of church offices, hymns to the Virgin, prophecies, satirical verses, mathematical puzzles, cooking recipes, a metrical chronicle, and treatises on a variety of pseudo-scientific subjects (Hathaway, pp. xlvi–li). The text of *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, occupying folios 33–61, is based on a lost late-thirteenth-century verse romance, remnants of which can be detected in two verse prophesies and in numerous verse fragments embedded in the prose (Hathaway, pp. xix–xx).

### **Author**

The creator of the prose version, whose identity is unknown, is usually called the compiler or *remanieur* (“adapter”): “it is highly likely that he inherited, or had easy access to, the manuscript of the couplet romance, and that he was himself the author of the prose *remanieur* which he copied” (Hathaway, p. xxxvii). E. J. Hathaway surmises that he might have been a tutor in a baronial household in Ludlow before seeking ecclesiastical preferment (p. xliv).

### **Genre**

As M. Dominica Legge suggests, *Fouke le Fitz Waryn* is an ancestral romance that focuses on the fortunes of a single family from the Norman Conquest to the thirteenth century. Invented in England and Scotland, the family chronicle was popular as a genre from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. Other examples include: *Guillaume d'Angleterre* (late twelfth), *Waldef* (late twelfth), *Boeve de Haumtone* (late twelfth), *Fergus* (thirteenth), and *Gui de Warewic* (thirteenth). These romances were composed by clerics, members of religious houses patronized by the parvenue families celebrated in the stories. Such stories have several elements in

## *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

common: 1) the hero is the founder of the family; 2) he is exiled to foreign lands; 3) he undertakes fantastic adventures, such as fighting a dragon; 4) he is reconciled to the king in the end and reclaims his inheritance; 5) since genealogy is important, his marriage and relations are carefully recounted; and 6) he is buried in a monastery that he founded (Legge, pp. 139–75).

### **Historical Background**

The romance “is a weird mixture of accurate information, plausible stories that lack confirmation, and magnificent flights of pure imagination” (Sidney Painter, quoted by Hathaway, p. ix) that recounts the Norman settlement, begun by William the Conqueror, on the Welsh border, the feudal rivalries among the Marcher barons, their allies, and the native Welsh rulers, and the complex dynastic relations achieved through marriage and conquest among all these groups. On this historical continuum, which sweeps from the Norman Conquest to the mid-thirteenth century, is superimposed the changing fortunes of one Norman family—the Fitz Waryns. The first third of the story traces the history of the family from Warin de Metz to the birth of Fouke Fitz Waryn III, who is the hero of the last two-thirds of the romance. In the first part, which is omitted in the translation that follows, Warin de Metz marries the Peverel heiress, Melette, and thus gains the lordship of Whittington. Their son, Fouke le Brun, marries another heiress, Hawyse, daughter of Joce de Dynan, and thereby gains the castle and town of Ludlow. Through the treachery of the Norman Ernalt de Lyls, the Dynan holdings are lost, and Fouke le Brun, Warin de Metz, and Joce de Dynan are defeated by the Welsh prince Yervard and his Norman ally Walter de Lacy. Severely wounded, Fouke seeks refuge with King Henry I, who commands Lacy to release his prisoners, but refuses to return Whittington to Fouke, granting release instead to Morys fitz Roger. Thus, the first part ends as the Fitz Warins are dispossessed of their lands and titles. The reclaiming of Whittington will be the principal challenge of Fouke le Brun’s eldest son, Fouke III, in the second part of the romance.

The second part (translated here) contains a mixture of largely accurate local history and what Hathaway calls “traditional folklore” (p. xxxiii). Among the known historical elements are “the revolt of Fouke in 1200–01 after Whittington castle had been adjudged to the Welsh castellan, Morys fitz Roger; the outlawry, terminated on 15 November 1203 by the pardon of Fouke himself and of more than forty other men who had been associated with him in his outlawry; and the marriage of Fouke III to Matilda of Caus, the widow of the Irish baron Theobald Walter” (p. xxvii). The folklore elements in the second part consist mainly of the outlaw narrative, which,

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

as we will see, has a number of striking parallels to the later Robin Hood tradition, though there are some encounters with giants and dragons.

### **Relation to Robin Hood tradition**

With *Hereward the Wake*, *Eustache the Monk*, and *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, we come to the end of an early form of the outlaw romance in which the heroes' adventures represent a mixture of history, legend, and myth. As Maurice Keen observes, the romantic hero, who travels the world, slays dragons, and rescues princesses, and the forest outlaw, who fights against more local evil and corruption, part ways. In the later stories of Robin Hood, Gamelyn, and Adam Bell, "chivalrous adventures in a world of enchantment find no place" (p. 39). While Keen is certainly correct, there remains a continuity of plot elements and character types linking the later outlaw stories to the earlier materials. Although there are significant differences between *Fouke le Fitz Waryn* and the later Robin Hood legend, the works share at least three major episodes, which suggest to us that we are dealing with sources rather than analogues.

In *Fouke* the outlaw's brother, John, confronts a caravan of ten merchants transporting "expensive cloths, furs, spices, and dresses for the personal use of the king and queen of England" (p. 694). Likewise, in the *Gest Little John and Much* stop the caravan of two monks, fifty-two yeomen, and seven pack-horses transporting the goods of the abbot of St. Mary's Abbey in York. In both works, the two groups are abducted into the forest, where they are questioned about the amount and ownership of their property. The truthfulness of their answers determines whether or not they can keep their goods. Fouke asks, "Are you speaking the truth" (p. 695), while Robin queries, "What is in your cofers? . . . Trewe than tell thou me" (lines 970–71). In both works, the "guests" dine with the outlaws, and, after the meal, they are allowed to leave without their property and money.

In another pair of episodes, disguise and deception are used to lure the victims into the outlaw's lair. Hiding in the forest of Windsor, Fouke observes that King John is hunting deer (p. 711). Disguising himself as a collier, Fouke greets the king and kneels before him. Upon being asked if he has seen any deer, Fouke, lying, replies that he has seen "One with long horns" and offers to guide the king to it. Going into the thicket, the king is captured by Fouke's men. Fearing that he will be killed, King John begs for mercy, and, after swearing an oath that he will restore Fouke's inheritance and grant him love and peace, he is released unharmed. Returning to the court, the king breaks his oath and plots to capture Fouke. In the parallel episode in the *Gest*, Little John, disguised as Reynolde Grenlefe, greets the sheriff who is

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

hunting in the forest and “knelyd hym beforen” (line 729). When Little John tells the sheriff that he has just seen “a ryght fayre harte” (line 738) and a herd of deer, he foolishly asks to be taken to the spot where Robin, “the mayster-herte” (line 753), awaits him. After dining with the outlaw band, the sheriff is stripped of his clothing and forced to sleep on the ground. Begging to be released the next morning, he swears an oath that he will not harm Robin or his men in the future. Upon being released, he, humiliated but unharmed, returns to Nottingham where he breaks his oath by plotting to capture Robin at the archery tournament.

In the final pair of similar episodes, one of the gang members is wounded in a fight and begs the leader to kill him. Fouke’s brother, William, is severely wounded by a Norman soldier and, rather than be captured, he begs Fouke to kill him by cutting off his head. Fouke replies that he would not do this for the world (p. 713). In the *Gest* (lines 1206 ff.), Little John is wounded in the sheriff’s ambush after the archery tournament, and he begs Robin to kill him by cutting off his head. Robin refuses and carries him to safety.

Previous critics have been reluctant to assert a direct connection between the French outlaw genre and the later English Robin Hood. While Maurice Keen admits that some of the episodes are “almost identical” and “substantially the same,” he is largely quiet about the “French connection.” J. C. Holt also comments upon the shared themes, but, like Keen, he largely dismisses any direct linkage because the Robin Hood tradition lacks an emphasis on the restitution of inheritance which “plays a fundamental role” in *Hereward*, *Eustace*, and *Fouke*. He asserts that “there is nothing of this in Robin Hood,” who “moves in a different world from that of the dispossessed feudal landowner” (p. 65). While the assertion may hold true for the early cycle of tales, it applies neither to *Gamelyn*, the earliest outlaw tale in Middle English, nor to the later Tudor Robert Hood, the disinherited and dispossessed Earl of Huntington. By stressing the differences, rather than the similarities — some strikingly close, both Keen and Holt have fostered the illusion of a native English outlaw tradition immune from outside influences.

#### **Note on the Thomas E. Kelly’s Translation**

The translation is based on the Anglo-Norman Texts edition, edited by Hathaway, Ricketts, Robson, and Wilshere. The starting point occurs on p. 22, line 23, of that edition. Bracketted material marks either the Norman French form or material added for clarification. I have usually translated names as they appear in the Anglo Norman, but in some instances have regularized them. For instance, *Blaunceville* I have transcribed as *Whittington*; *Bretaigne le Menour* (Little Britain) as *Brittany*.

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

Fouke's wife *Mahaud* (Maud) or *Mahaud de Caus* I have translated as *Matilda*, since Robert Eyton's *Antiquities of Shropshire* (1861) VII 73, n. 28, identifies Fouke's wife as Matilde le Vavasour. It is perhaps coincidence that Marian, Robin Hood's fiancée, is referred to as Matilda Fitzwater in Munday's two plays, *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntington*.

## Select Bibliography

### Text

British Library, Royal 12 C. XII, folios 33–61.

### Editions

Hathaway, E. J., P. T. Ricketts, C. A. Robson, and A. D. Wilshere, eds. *Fouke Le Fitz Waryn*. Anglo-Norman Text Society. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975. [Base text for Kelly's translation.]

Stevenson, Joseph, ed. and trans. *The Legend of Fulk Fitz-Warin*. In *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages*. Rolls Series. Vol. 66. London: Longman and Co., 1857, 1875; rpt. Kraus Reprint, 1965. Pp. 275–415. [The selection included here occurs on pp. 323–415. Stevenson's translation is, according to Hathaway, creditable and serviceable but "not impeccable" (p. cxxi).]

### Commentary and Criticism

Brandlin, Louis. "Nouvelles recherches sur *Fouke Fitz Warin*." *Romania* 55 (1929), 17–44.

Francis, E. A. "The Background to *Fulk Fitzwarin*." In *Studies in Medieval French Presented to Alfred Ewert in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1961. Pp. 322–27.

Hathaway, E. J., et al. See above.

*Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

Holt, J. C. *Robin Hood*. Revised and enlarged edition. London: Thames and Hudson, 1989.

Jones, Timothy Scott. "Redemptive Fictions: The Contexts of Outlawry in Medieval English Chronicle and Romance." Ph.D. diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1994. [Section on *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*.]

Keen, Maurice. *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*. Revised paperback edition. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.

Legge, M. Dominica. *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

Painter, Sidney. *The Reign of King John*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1949.



### **From *Fouke le Fitz Waryn***

Fouke and [his wife] Hawyse remained for some time with the King, long enough in fact to have five sons: Fouke, William, Philip the Red, John, and Alan. During the same period King Henry had four sons: Henry, Richard the Lion-hearted, John, and Geoffrey, who later became Duke of Brittany. Henry was crowned during his father's lifetime, but died before his father. Richard then reigned after his father's death, followed in turn by his brother John who, all his life, was wicked, contrary, and spiteful. Fouke the younger [also called Foket] was brought up with King Henry's four sons, and he was much loved by all of them except John, with whom he quarreled frequently.

It so happened that one day John and Fouke were sitting all alone in a room playing chess. John picked up the chess board and struck Fouke a great blow with it. Feeling the pain, Fouke raised his foot and delivered John a swift kick to the chest. John's head struck the wall so hard that he became dizzy and fainted. Fouke's immediate reaction was fright, but he was glad there was no one else in the room with them. He rubbed John's ears, and he regained consciousness. John immediately went to the King, his father, and lodged a complaint. "Be quiet, you good-for-nothing," said the King, "you are always squabbling. If Fouke did all you said he did, you most likely deserved all you got." He called the boy's master and had the Prince soundly whipped for his complaint. John was very angry with Fouke, and from that day forward never again had any true affection for him.

When King Henry, the father, died his son Richard became King. Richard held Fouke le Brun, the son of Waryn, in very high esteem because of his loyalty. At Winchester the King summoned before him the five sons of Fouke le Brun — Foket, Philip the Red, William, John, and Alan — and their cousin, Baldwin de Hodenet. With great pomp all six men were dubbed and raised to knighthood. Sir Fouke the younger, along with his brothers and their troops, crossed the sea to seek honor and distinction. There was not a single tourney or joust at which they did not wish to be present. And so highly were they esteemed everywhere that it became a common saying that they were without equals in strength, bounty, and bravery. For they had such good fortune that they came into every combat being considered and praised as the best.

Following the death of Fouke le Brun, King Richard sent letters to Sir Fouke to come to England to receive his father's lands. Fouke and his brothers were deeply saddened to learn that Fouke le Brun, their good father, was dead, and they all returned to London. King Richard was very glad to see them, and he restored to them all the feudal holdings

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

which Fouke le Brun possessed at his death. The King was preparing for his journey to the Holy Land, so he entrusted all the March to the keeping of Sir Fouke. The King loved and favored him much for his loyalty and great reputation. Fouke stood well with the King during the whole of the life of King Richard.

After Richard's death, his brother John was crowned King of England. Soon thereafter, John sent for Sir Fouke to come and talk with him about various matters concerning the March, and said that he was coming there himself on a visit. He went first to Baldwin, now called Castle Montgomery. When Moris, the son of Roger de Powys, lord of Whittington (Shropshire), perceived that King John was approaching the March, he sent to the King a handsome steed and all white molted gyrfalcon.<sup>1</sup> After John thanked him for the gifts, Moris came to speak to the King who asked him to stay and to be of his council, making him warden of the entire March.

When Moris saw the time was ripe he asked the King, if it were his pleasure, to confirm by royal charter the honor of Whittington [Blaunceville] to him and his heirs, as King Henry his father had formerly confirmed it to his own father, Roger de Powys. The King knew full well that Whittington belonged to Sir Fouke by right, but he also remembered the blow that Fouke had given him when they were young. He delighted that he now had an excellent opportunity for revenge. So he granted that whatever Moris should put into writing, he would seal it; and, for the favor, Moris also promised John one hundred pounds cash.

There was a knight nearby who had overheard all that the King and Moris had said. He came in haste and told Sir Fouke how the King had confirmed by his charter to Sir Moris the lands which of right belonged to Fouke. With his four brothers Fouke came before the King and asked him that they might have the benefit of common law, whereby these lands were theirs by right and reason as Fouke's inheritance. And they pleaded with the King that he would have the goodness to accept one hundred pounds, on condition that he would grant them the award of his court for gain or for loss. The King told them that he would maintain the grant which he had already made to Sir Moris, whether Fouke was angry or not. Then Sir Moris spoke out saying to Sir Fouke: "Sir Knight, you are very foolish to challenge my lands. If you say that you have right to Whittington you lie. Were it not for the King's presence, I would prove it upon your body." Before any further words were spoken Sir William, Fouke's brother, stepped forward, and with his fist gave Sir Moris such a blow on the face that it was covered with blood. The knights came between them so that no more damage was done. Then Sir Fouke said to the King: "Sire, you are my liege lord, and I have become bound to you by fealty since I have been in your service, and because I hold lands from you. In return you ought to afford me reasonable

---

<sup>1</sup> Stevenson translates the adjective *muer*, "molted," as "for his mews."

### *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

support, but you fail me both in reason and in common law. Never has a good King denied law in his court to his free tenants; therefore, I renounce my allegiance to you." Having said this, he departed from the court and went to his house.

Fouke and his brothers armed themselves immediately, and Baldwin de Hodenet did the same. When they had gone half a league from the city they encountered fifteen well-armed knights, the strongest and bravest of all the King's retainers, who ordered them to return. The knights said they had promised the King that he should have their heads. Sir Fouke turned round and exclaimed: "Fair sirs, you were very foolish when you promised to give what you could not get." Then they attacked each other with lances and swords, and four of the King's most valiant knights were soon killed. All the others were wounded to the point of death, save one, who seeing the peril took to flight. When he came to the city the King inquired of him whether Fitz Waren had been taken prisoner. "Not at all," he replied, "nor was he even injured. He and all his companions have escaped, and all of our men, excepting myself, were slain. I alone escaped with great difficulty." "Where," said the King, "are Gyrart de France, Pierre of Avignon, and Sir Amys le Marchys?" "Slain, sire." Then ten knights arrived, all on foot, for Sir Fouke had made off with their chargers. Some of these knights had lost their noses, some their chins. All ten were a piteous sight. The King swore a great oath that he would take revenge on them and all their lineage.

Fouke next went to Alberbury [in Shropshire] and told dame Hawyse, his mother, how he had traveled to Winchester. Fouke took a great sum of money from his mother and left with his brothers and his cousins for Brittany [Bretaygne le Menur], where he remained for some time. King John seized all the lands which Fouke had in England and did much harm to all his relatives.

Fouke and his four brothers, along with two cousins, Audulph de Bracy and Baldwin de Hodenet, bid adieu to their friends in Brittany, and returned to England. In the day time they rested in woods and moors and traveled on only at night, for they dared not face an attack in daylight. They did not have sufficient manpower to engage the King's troops. At length they came to Higford [in Shropshire], to Sir Walter de Higford, who had married dame Vyleyne, the daughter of Waryn de Metz. Her true name was Emelyne, and she was Sir Fouke's aunt. When he arrived at Alberbury, the next stop on his journey, the local people told him that his mother had recently been buried. On her tomb Fouke deeply grieved his mother's death and prayed compassionately for her soul.

That same night Sir Fouke and his people went into a forest called Babbins Wood [Babbyng], near Whittington, to watch for Moris Fitz Roger. A valet passing nearby spotted them and ran to tell Moris what he had seen. Moris armed himself in regalia, taking his shield — green, with two wild boars of beaten gold, and the border of argent, with fleurs-de-lys of azure. He had in his company the nine sons of Guy de la Montaigne and the three sons of Aaron de Clerfountaygne, so that there were thirty men well-

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

mounted and five hundred foot soldiers.

When Fouke saw Moris he raced out of the forest. A sharp fight was begun between them, with Moris being wounded in the shoulder. After many knights and foot soldiers had been killed, Moris finally fled towards his castle with Fouke in pursuit. Fouke thought to have struck Moris on the helmet as he was escaping, but the stroke fell on the saddle of his charger. Then Morgan the son of Aaron shot forth from the castle, and with a crossbow bolt he struck Fouke through the leg. Fouke was angry that he could not thus finish the battle and avenge himself upon Sir Moris. As for the wound in his leg, he took no heed of it.

Sir Moris made his complaint to the King that Sir Fouke had returned to England and had wounded him in the shoulder. The King became wondrously enraged, and appointed one hundred knights with their retinue to go through all England to search for Fouke, to capture him, and bring him to the King — alive or dead. The King was to pay all their expenses, and in addition he promised to give them lands and rich fees if their search were successful. The knights went throughout the whole of England in search of Sir Fouke. But wherever they heard that Sir Fouke might be located, they avoided going to that place; for they feared him beyond measure. Some loved him, but many feared his noble chivalry, apprehending the danger that might happen to them should they test his strength and daring.

Sir Fouke and his company came to the Forest of Braydon [in Wiltshire] where they remained in hiding. They dared not venture forth openly, for fear of the King. One day, more than ten burgesses arrived carrying through the forest expensive cloths, furs, spices, and dresses for the personal use of the King and Queen of England. The men were merchants who had purchased these rich goods with the money of the King of England, and were traveling to deliver their purchases to the King. They were followed by twenty-four foot-soldiers charged with guarding the King's treasure.

When Fouke saw the merchants he called his brother John and told him to go and speak with these people and find out what country they were from. John spurred on his horse and rode off to speak with the merchants. When he inquired from what land they might be, a spokesman for the group, a haughty and proud person, came forward and asked what business it was of his to have such information. John replied politely by inviting them to come and speak with his master in the forest. If they would not go willingly, he said, he would have to use force. A man-at-arms came forward and struck John a great blow with his sword. In return John gave him such a stroke on his head that he fell senseless to the ground. Then Sir Fouke and his company arrived on the scene and attacked the merchants. They defended themselves very vigorously, but at length they surrendered, for they could not do otherwise.

Fouke took them into the forest, where they told him that they were the King's merchants. When Fouke heard this he was delighted, and said: "Sir merchants, if you lose

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

this property, on whom will the loss fall? Tell me the truth." "Sir," they said, "if we lose it through our cowardice, or by our own carelessness, we ourselves are responsible; but if we lose it otherwise, by danger of the sea, or by force, the loss will fall upon the King." "Are you speaking the truth?" "Assuredly, sir," they replied. When Fouke understood that the loss would be the King's, he then measured out the rich cloth and the expensive furs with his lance. He clothed all who were with him, tall and short, in this rich cloth. To each he gave according to his degree. Everyone of his followers received a liberal share, and of the other goods, each took what he liked.

When evening came and the merchants had dined heartily, he bid them Godspeed, and asked them to salute the King in the name of Fouke Fitz Waryn, who thanked him heartily for all this fine clothing. During the entire time that he was a banished man neither Fouke nor any of his followers did damage at any time to any one, save the King and his knights.

At last the merchants and their foot-soldiers arrived before the King. Wounded and maimed, they repeated to him all that Fouke had charged them to convey, describing how Fouke had taken the King's property. He became enraged, and in his fury sent out a proclamation throughout the realm. Any person who would bring Fouke to him, dead or alive, would receive a thousand pounds. The King would, moreover, add to this cash reward all the lands that belonged to Fouke in England.

Fouke next journeyed into the forest of Kent. Leaving his knights in the thick of the forest, he went riding alone along the highway. There he met a messenger, wearing a wreath of red roses around his head, who was singing merrily. Fouke asked him politely for the chaplet of flowers, and if he would be so kind would pay him double for it. "Sir," said the messenger, "He is very niggardly of his property who will not give a chaplet of roses at the request of a knight." And he gave the wreath to Fouke, who, in return, gave him twenty shillings. The messenger recognized Fouke, for he had seen him often.

When the messenger later arrived in Canterbury, he met the hundred knights who had been searching for Fouke through all of England. "Sirs," he said to them, "where have you come from? Have you yet found the man you have been seeking by the order of our lord the King and for your own advancement?" "No," they replied. "Then what will you give me," he said, "if I take you to the place where I have seen and spoken with him today?" The knights' reply, in both goods and promises, was so generous that the messenger told them where he had seen Fouke. He also described how he had received twenty shillings in exchange for the chaplet of roses which he had graciously given.

The hundred knights immediately sent out a summons through the countryside. They hastily rounded up knights, squires, and foot-soldiers, in sufficient numbers to encircle the whole forest. As if this were an animal hunt, beaters and receivers were placed at strategic points. Others were positioned throughout the countryside with horns to give warning the moment Fouke and his companions came out of the forest. Fouke, however,

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

remained in the forest, unaware of all this activity. At length he heard a horn sounded by one of the attacking knights. He became suspicious and ordered his brothers to mount their horses. William, Philip, John, and Alan immediately mounted, as did Audulph de Bracy, Baldwin de Hodnet, and John Malveysyn. The three Cosham brothers, Thomas, Pieres, and William, who were good cross-bowmen, and all the rest of Fouke's followers were soon ready for the assault.

With his companions Fouke came out of the forest and saw, before all the others, the hundred knights who had been hunting him throughout England. In the first rush of battle Fouke's men killed Gilbert de Mountferrant, Jordan de Colchester, and many other knights. They made several passes back and forth through the hundred knights, knocking them down in great numbers. At length, however, many knights, squires, burgesses, foot-soldiers, and people in great numbers joined in the battle. Fouke wisely perceived that he and his men could not continue thus. Finally, after his brother John received a bad head wound, he decided to return into the forest. Fouke and his companions spurred their horses. But before they left, many a good knight, squire, and foot-soldier were slain. People from all over then began to sound the cry, and they were pursued by the populace everywhere they went. At length they entered into a wood and saw a man raising his horn, about to sound the warning. In an instant, one of Fouke's men shot him through the body with a cross-bow bolt. That put a quick end to the warning blast.

Fouke and his companions were soon forced to leave their horses and fled on foot towards a nearby abbey. When the porter saw them coming he ran to shut the gates. Alan, being very tall, quickly got over the wall, and the porter began to run away. "Stop," said Alan, and ran after him. He took the porter's keys from him and gave him a blow with the chain from which the keys hung. The porter thus had good reason to regret his attempted flight. Alan then let all his brothers enter the abbey. Once inside, Fouke grabbed the habit of an old monk and speedily dressed himself in it. Taking a large staff in his hand, he went out of the gate. After he had shut the gate he walked on, as if lame of one foot, supporting his whole body on his big stick. Shortly thereafter the knights and foot-soldiers arrived followed by a great mob. One of the knights shouted: "Old monk, have you seen any armed knights pass here?" "Indeed, sir, and may God repay them for all the mischief that they have done!" "Just what have they done to you?" "Sir," he replied, "I am old, and I cannot help myself, so worn out am I. Seven came on horseback, and with them fifteen others on foot. Because I could not get out of their way quickly enough, they did not spare me. They had their horses trample over me, and took little account of my protest." "Say no more," replied the knight "you shall be well avenged this very day." The knights and all the others rode off in such haste to pursue Fouke that they quickly left the abbey a full league behind them. Meanwhile, Sir Fouke was left there in peace to see what would happen next.

Sir Gyrard de Malfee soon arrived accompanied by ten well mounted knights. They had

### *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

come from a distance and were riding horses of great value. Gyrard said mockingly, "Well, here is a fat and burly monk. He has a belly big enough to hold two gallons of cabbage." Fouke's brothers were still inside the gate, from where they could see and hear all of Fouke's proceedings. Without a word, Fouke raised his big staff and struck Sir Gyrard such a blow beneath the ear that he fell senseless to the ground. Fouke's brothers, when they saw this, immediately rushed out of the gate and subdued Sir Gyrard and the ten knights. After tying up their prisoners very tightly in the porter's lodge, they took all the harnesses and the good horses and rode off non-stop until they came to Higford [in Shropshire]. Once there, John's wounds were able to be healed at last.

During their stay at Higford a messenger arrived who had been seeking Sir Fouke for some time. He greeted him on behalf of Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury. The Archbishop wanted to speak with Fouke as soon as possible. So Fouke led his men to a place near Canterbury, in the forest where he had been before. There he left all his company, except his brother William. The two dressed themselves like merchants and went into Canterbury to meet with the Archbishop, Hubert Walter.

"Gentlemen," said the Bishop, "you are very welcome. You no doubt know that Sir Thebaud le Botiler [Theobald Walter, Butler of Ireland], my brother, is now deceased. Before his death he married dame Matilda de Caus, a very rich lady, and the fairest in all England. King John himself desires her for her beauty, and it is with great difficulty that she guards herself from him. She is here in Canterbury under my protection, but you shall see her presently. My dear friend Fouke, it is with some urgency that I pray and command you to take her for your wife, with my blessing." Fouke soon met with the lady, seeing for himself how good, as well as beautiful she was, not to mention her excellent reputation. As for her possessions in Ireland, she had fortresses, cities, and lands, plus rents and great fiefs. So with the assent of his brother William and on the counsel of Archbishop Hubert, he married dame Matilda de Caus.

Fouke remained two days in Canterbury, and then bid his farewell. He left his new wife there in the care of the Archbishop before returning to join his companions again in the forest. When he told them all that he had done, they made fun of him, laughed at him, and called him "husband." They also asked him just where he would put the fair lady, in a castle or in the forest. Yet, while they often joked together in this way, they also did more serious mischief to the King everywhere the opportunity presented itself. But they did such to none other than the King, excepting those persons who were openly their enemies.

A knight named Robert Fitz-Sampson was residing in the march of Scotland. The knight frequently received Sir Fouke and his company, and he entertained them with great honor. He was a man of great wealth whose wife's name was dame Anable. She was a very courteous lady. At that time also there was a knight in the country named Pieres de Bruyle. This Pieres was in the habit of gathering together all the gentlemen's sons of

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

the country who were addicted to thieving, along with ribalds. It was their custom to go through the country, killing and robbing decent people, merchants and others. Whenever this Pieres led his company out to rob people, he assumed the name of Fouke Fitz-Waryn. As a result, the real Fouke and his companions had acquired a very bad reputation for matters in which they were blameless.

Fouke's fear of King John was such that he dared not tarry too long in one place. So it was by night that he came into the march of Scotland, very near the court of Robert Fitz-Sampson. As he approached he saw a light within the court and could hear people talking. He heard his own name mentioned often in the conversations. After telling his companions to remain outside, Fouke himself boldly entered the courtyard from where he made his way into the great hall. Once inside he could see Pieres de Brubyle and some other knights sitting at supper. Robert Fitz-Sampson and his good lady and all their household were bound with ropes, laid out on the floor off to one side of the hall. Sir Pieres and his men were all wearing masks. Those who were serving the meal, when they knelt before Sir Pieres, called him their lord Sir Fouke. The lady, who lay bound near her husband in the hall, said very pitifully, "Oh, Sir Fouke, for God's sake have mercy. I never did you any harm, but have loved you as best I might."

To this point Sir Fouke had kept quiet, listening to everything that had been said. But when he heard the lady speak, she who had done him much kindness, he could bear it no longer. Alone, without any of his companions, he stepped forward with his sword drawn and said: "Silence! I order you, stay where you are. Let no one move hand or foot." And he swore that, if any one were so bold as to move, he would cut him into small pieces. Pieres and his companions felt trapped. "Now," said Fouke, "which of you here calls himself Fouke?" "Sir," said Pieres, "I am a knight; I am called Fouke." "Well, Sir Fouke," he shouted, "by God, you had better move quickly. Tie up all your companions tightly. If you do not, you shall be the first to lose your head." Pieres, terrified by the threat, got up and unbound the lord and the lady and all the others of the household. He then tied all his companions well and firmly. Next, Fouke made him cut off the heads of all those whom he had bound. After he had beheaded all his companions [Fouke said]: "You recreant knight, you who called yourself Fouke, you are a cowardly liar. I am Fouke, and you will now pay dearly for having falsely caused me to be charged with theft." Forthwith he cut off Pieres' head, after which he called his companions inside to join him in supper. All made themselves very comfortable. Thus did Sir Fouke save Sir Robert and all his treasure, so that nothing was lost.

Very often King John did great harm to Sir Fouke, but Sir Fouke was no less wise and crafty than he was strong and bold. The King and his people very frequently pursued Sir Fouke by tracking the footprints of his horses. Fouke countered on many occasions by having his horses shod with the shoes put on backwards. In that way the King was deceived in his pursuit. Sir Fouke was to suffer many a hard fight before he finally

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

regained his inheritance.

Sir Fouke took leave of Sir Robert Fitz-Sampson and went to Alberbury where he set up camp in a forest near the river. Fouke called on John de Rampaigne, saying to him: "John, you know a lot about minstrelsy and juggling. Do you have the courage to go to Whittington and perform before Moris Fitz-Roger to discover just what they are up to?" John agreed to do it. He prepared himself by first crushing an herb and putting it into his mouth. As a result, his face began to swell so badly that it puffed out. His whole face became so discolored that his own companions scarcely knew him. John dressed himself in poor clothes, and he took his box with his juggling equipment and carried a great staff in his hand. When he arrived in Whittington he told the porter that he was a juggler. The porter brought him before Sir Moris Fitz-Roger, who asked him where he was born. "Sir," he replied, "in the march of Scotland." "And what news do you have from there?" "Sir, I know none, other than the recent death of Sir Fouke Fitz-Waryn. He was killed in a robbery which he was committing in the house of Sir Robert Fitz-Sampson." "Are you speaking the truth?" "Yes, certainly," he said, "people from all over the countryside say it is so." "Minstrel," said he, "I will give you this cup of pure silver for your news." The minstrel took the cup, and thanked Sir Moris for his generosity.

John de Rampaigne was very ugly of face and body, and consequently the scoundrels of the household mocked him. They treated him like a fool, and pulled him by his hair and his feet. He raised his staff and gave one of the scoundrels such a blow on the head that his brains flew into the middle of the room. "Wicked rascal," said the lord, "what have you done?" "Sir," said he, "by God's mercy, I cannot help myself. I have a malady which is very grievous, as you may judge by my face, which is so swollen. This malady takes entire possession of me for certain hours of the day every week. It is not within my own power to contain myself." Moris swore that were it not for the good news which John had brought him he would have him beheaded forthwith. The juggler thus hastened his departure, for he had no desire to tarry further. So he returned to see Fouke and described word for word what he had heard and done at the court in Whittington. One important item of news was the fact that Sir Moris, in his function as keeper of the march, was planning a trip. Along with fifteen knights and his entire household, he was to leave the very next day for the castle of Shrewsbury. Sir Fouke was delighted to learn this news, and so were his companions.

The next morning Fouke was up early. He and his men armed themselves well for the events to follow. Moris and his fifteen knights set out towards Shrewsbury. Also in the company were the four sons of Guy Fitz Candelou of Porkington [now Brogyntyn in Shropshire], and the rest of the household. When Fouke caught sight of his enemy, he was very pleased. At the same time, he was also much incensed, because Guy was unlawfully keeping his heritage from him by force. Moris looked off in the direction of Great Ness, where he quickly recognized the heraldic markings on a shield: quartered

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

with gules and argent dancetté [a silver fesse (two horizontal lines defining the middle third) marked by three indentations]. By this coat of arms he immediately knew that it was Fouke. "Now I am certain," said Moris, "that jugglers are liars. For there stands Fouke, very much alive." Moris and his knights fought bravely. Boldly they attacked Fouke and his companions and called them thieves. They said that before evening many heads would be placed on the high tower of Shrewsbury. Fouke and his brothers defended themselves with such vigor, however, that Sir Moris, his fifteen knights, and the four sons of Guy Fitz-Candelou of Porkington were all quickly slain. Fouke had that many fewer enemies!

From there Fouke and his companions went towards Rhuddlan [in Flintshire] to speak to Sir Lewys [Llewelyn the Great, Prince of Gwynned 1199–1240], the Prince of Wales who had married Joan, the daughter of King Henry and the sister of King John.<sup>1</sup> The visit was prompted by the fact that Sir Lewys had been brought up together with Sir Fouke and his brothers in the court of King Henry. The Prince was very glad at the coming of Sir Fouke and asked him what agreement there was between the King and him. "Sir," said Fouke, "None, for I cannot have peace with the King no matter what I do. Sir I have, therefore, come to you and to your good lady to make peace with you." "Truly," said the Prince, "I grant and give you my peace, and you shall have a good reception from me. The King of England doesn't know how to have peace with you, or me, or any other." "Sir," said Fouke, "many thanks, for I trust much in you and in your great loyalty. But since you have granted me your peace, I must tell you something else. Moris Fitz-Roger is dead, for I have killed him." When the Prince learned that Moris was dead he became very angry. He exclaimed that had he not just given his peace to Fouke he would have had him drawn and hanged, for Moris was his cousin. At that moment Princess Joan stepped forward to confirm the peace made between her husband and Sir Fouke. They embraced each other and all ill-will was pardoned.

At this time there was great discord between Prince Lewys and Gwenwynwyn, son of Owen Cyfeiliog, to whom a great part of the country of Powys belonged. Gwenwynwyn was very proud, haughty, and fierce. He refused to submit himself to the Prince for any reason. Instead, he brought great destruction to his land. By force the Prince had totally beaten down the castle of Methy whole and had taken possession of Mochnant [in Montgomeryshire], Llannerch Hudol [in Montgomeryshire], and other lands which belonged to Gwenwynwyn. The Prince assigned Fouke to act as overseer of all his land holdings, commanding him further to attack Gwenwynwyn and destroy all his lands.

Fouke, however, was prudent and very wary, for he knew that the Prince was in the wrong. So he told him very courteously: "Sir, for God's sake, you should pardon

---

<sup>1</sup> See the Hathaway edition, note 22.9, for a discussion of these alliances.

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

Gwenwynwyn. If you do what you have planned, you will be much blamed in foreign countries by all people. And please do not be annoyed with me for what I am telling you. Everyone says, in fact, that you have sinned against him. Sir, for God's sake, therefore, have mercy on him. He will most surely reform himself in his dealings with you, and will serve you to your satisfaction. Do not lose sight of the fact that you don't know when you will need your barons." Fouke preached and talked to the Prince at length and so convinced him to change his strategy. Shortly thereafter, Lewys and Gwenwynwyn were reconciled with each other when the Prince gave back all the lands which he had previously taken.

King John was at Winchester when the news came to him that Fouke had killed Moris, Roger's son. He learned further that Fouke was staying with Prince Lewys, the husband of his [John's] own sister. His immediate reaction was a moment of thoughtful reflection. For a good while he did not utter a word. Then he shouted: "Hey! By Saint Mary, I am the King. I rule England. I am duke of Anjou and Normandy, and the whole of Ireland is under my lordship. Yet I cannot find a single man in all my jurisdiction who, no matter how much I offer to give, will avenge me for the damage and the disgrace which Fouke has done me. But you can be certain that I will not desist until I avenge myself upon this Prince." He then sent forth a summons to all his earls and barons and his other knights that they should on a certain day be at Shrewsbury with all their people.

When all those summoned got to Shrewsbury, Lewys was warned by his friends that King John was planning to wage war against him. At that he called Fouke and told him the bad news. Fouke in turn assembled thirty thousand trusted men at castle Bala in Pennlyn [in Merionethshire]. Gwenwynwyn, the son of Owen, also came with his troops, all strong and bold men. Fouke was a very crafty strategist in war and was familiar with the terrain over which King John must travel, including all the narrow passes. One in particular, called the ford of Gymele,<sup>1</sup> was a very tight passage. It was very narrow, enclosed with woods and marshes, so that the only way to pass was by the highway. Fouke and Gwenwynwyn, when they reached the ford with their troops, dug out beyond the highway a long, deep, and broad ditch. They filled the ditch with water, so that no one could pass, partly because of the marsh on one side, and partly because of the ditch. Beyond the ditch they built a well fortified palisade. To this day that ditch is still to be seen.

King John with his army finally reached the ford, which he expected to pass safely. Then he noticed just beyond it more than ten thousand armed knights, who were guarding the passage. Fouke and his companions had passed the ford by a hidden path that they had made and found themselves on the same side as the King. Gwenwynwyn and

---

<sup>1</sup> Fr. "le Gue Gymele." See Hathaway, note 35.9, for a discussion of this location.

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

many other knights were also with them. The King immediately recognized Fouke and ordered his knights to attack from all sides. Fouke and his companions defended themselves like lions. They were often knocked off their horses, but quickly remounted, killing many of the King's knights in the process. Gwenwynwyn, however, took a bad blow to his helmet and received a serious head wound. When Fouke saw that neither he nor his men could long remain on the outside of their ditch, they returned by their hidden path to defend their palisade and the ditch. From that position they were able to shoot crossbow bolts and light spears against the King's troops, killing many and wounding an immense number in that manner. This fierce struggle lasted till the evening. When the King saw so many of his people killed and wounded, he was so sorrowful that he did not know what to do. He finally returned to Shrewsbury.

As for King John's character, he was a man without conscience, wicked, cross, and hated by all good people. In addition he was lustful. Whenever he heard described any fair lady or damsel, he wished to have her at once, either to entrap her by promise or gift, or to ravish her by force. It mattered little whether she was the wife or daughter of an earl or a baron, or of any other for that matter. That was why he was the most hated. For this reason too many great lords of England had renounced their allegiance to the King, which in turn led to his being less feared by many.

John Lestrange, lord of Knokin and of Ruyton-of-the-Eleven-Towns [in Shropshire], remained faithful to the King and continued to bring harm to Prince Lewys and his people. For this reason the Prince had the castle of Ruyton overthrown. When King John learned that this entire garrison was captured and imprisoned, he was very upset. Soon thereafter, Prince Lewys summoned Sir Fouke to castle Bala for the purpose of restoring to him not only Whittington, his heritage, but also Ystrat Marchell [in Montgomeryshire] and Dinorben [in Denbighshire]. After first expressing his thanks to the Prince, Fouke went to Whittington with his own people and had the castle restored and thoroughly repaired.

John Lestrange came to the King and told him that Fouke had done great harm to his people by taking the castle of Ruyton. Since he was in very good standing with the King, he took the liberty to request royal troops in order to avenge himself upon Sir Fouke. To that end the King summoned Sir Henry de Audley [of Staffordshire], who was lord and first conqueror of the Red Castle. He commanded Sir Henry to take ten thousand knights, the most valiant of England, and ordered that the lord and his knights should be obedient to Sir John Lestrange in all matters. Sir Henry and Sir John and their knights set out for Whittington. Along their way, they slew whatever men and women they found and pillaged the countryside. A cry of panic was raised everywhere.

Fouke remained in Whittington, where he had assembled a large contingent of men to defend his newly acquired lands. The company included seven hundred Welsh knights and many foot soldiers. When the news came that Sir John and Sir Henry were coming

### *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

towards Whittington, Sir Fouke and his men armed themselves forthwith, going secretly to Middle Pass. The moment Sir John saw Sir Fouke he spurred on his war horse with lance down. He gave Sir Fouke such a blow with his lance that it flew into splinters. Sir Fouke in turn repaid Sir John by a blow to the face that sliced through his helmet and knocked him to the ground. The scar left by this blow was to be visible for the rest of John's life. In an extraordinary act of valor, however, John quickly leaped up from the ground and cried out: "Now, my lords, all of you attack Fouke." Fouke proudly answered: "By all means, and here comes Fouke to meet you all." Then the knights from both camps struck out at each other. Fouke, Sir Thomas Corbet, and their other companions slew many; but, Alan the son of Waryn, and Philip his brother, were wounded. When Fouke saw his brothers wounded, he became so enraged that he slashed out at all around him. Whomsoever his sword hit had no chance to escape from death. Unfortunately, Sir Fouke's troops were vastly outnumbered. In the battle he had only seven hundred knights, while the others were ten thousand or more. Seeing that he could not win this skirmish, Fouke returned towards Whittington. In the press Sir Audulph de Bracy was knocked from his horse. Although he had boldly defended himself, at the last he was taken prisoner and carried off to Shrewsbury.

Sir Henry and Sir John were much delighted with the capture. They came to Shrewsbury before the king, where they delivered up Sir Audulph. The King argued heatedly with his prisoner, swearing boastfully that he would have him drawn and hanged, because he was both a traitor and a thief. He had killed his knights, burnt his cities, and overthrown his castles. Audulph in reply answered the King boldly, saying that neither he nor any of his kindred had ever been traitors.

Back in Whittington, Fouke saw first to the care of his brothers and his other troops. When their wounds had been cleaned and their injuries attended to, it came to his attention that Sir Audulph was missing. He searched everywhere, but when he realized Audulph was nowhere to be found he thought he would never see him again. No one ever expressed sorrow at the loss of a friend more movingly than did Sir Fouke on this occasion. At length John de Rampayne, seeing the depth of Fouke's grief, came forward and said: "Sir, have done with this lamentation. If it please God, before tomorrow at prime, you shall have good news of Sir Audulph de Bracy. For I myself shall go to speak to the King."

John de Rampayne was a fairly skillful musician and juggler. He could play the harp and vielle, as well as the psaltery. He dressed himself in fine clothes worthy of any earl or baron and stained his hair and the whole of his body jet black. In fact, there was nothing left white except his teeth. Around his neck he hung a beautiful tabor, before mounting a handsome palfrey. Once inside the town of Shrewsbury he rode through, as far as the gate of the castle and was stared at by many as he rode along. John presented himself to the King by kneeling before him and saluting very courteously. The King

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

saluted him in return and asked him whence he came.

"Sire," said he, "I am an Ethiopian minstrel, having been born in that country." In reply the King inquired further. "Are all the men of your land the same color as you?" "Yes, my lord, men and women alike." "What do they say of me in foreign realms?" "Sire," said he, "you are the most renowned King in the whole of Christendom. It is your great renown that explains my visit to your court." "Sir," said the King, "you are very welcome." John thanked him briefly, then added quietly that the King was renowned more for his wickedness than his goodness. Of course the King did not hear the last remark. So John spent the remainder of the day just playing his tabor and other instruments. When the King had gone to bed, Sir Henry de Audley sent for the black minstrel to be brought to his chamber. All present joined in the singing, and when Sir Henry had drunk a great deal he said he to a valet: "Go get Sir Audulph de Bracy, whom the King intends to put to death tomorrow. He shall at least have a pleasant night before his death." The valet quickly brought Sir Audulph into the chamber, where all were talking while the music continued. John began playing a song which Sir Audulph was accustomed to singing. Sir Audulph raised his head and looked the minstrel straight in the face. With some difficulty he finally recognized John. Then, when Sir Henry asked for drink, John obligingly leaped to his feet and served the cup to everyone in the room. John acted very cunningly, sprinkling a powder into the cup in such manner that no one perceived him. He was, after all, an excellent juggler. All those who drank became so drowsy that very soon afterward they lay down to go to sleep. When they were all asleep, John dragged one of the King's fools over and placed him between the two knights who had been assigned to guard the condemned prisoner. John and Sir Audulph then found some towels and sheets which were in the chamber, and escaped by a window facing the Severn River. They immediately headed towards Whittington, which was twelve leagues from Shrewsbury.

The matter could not long be hidden. Early the next morning, when he was told the details of the escape, the King was furious. That same morning Fouke had risen early, for he had slept little the preceding night. As he looked in the direction of Shrewsbury he saw Sir Audulph and John approaching. No need to ask whether he was glad when he saw them. He ran out to embrace and kiss them both. Sir Audulph told him all that John had done and how they escaped. Fouke, who until shortly before had been sad, rejoiced greatly at this good news.

Now let us return for a moment to speak of Fouke's wife, dame Matilda de Caus. When the King, who had lusted after Matilda, learned for certain that she was married to Sir Fouke, his enemy, by the counsel of Archbishop Hubert, he did great harm to both the Archbishop and the lady. He wished to have her carried off by violence, but she was able to find refuge in the church. There she gave birth to a daughter, Hawyse, who was later to become Lacy of Wem. The Archbishop himself baptized the baby.

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

Somewhat later Fouke and his companions came to Canterbury under cover of night. From there they took his wife to Higford, where she remained for some time. It then came to pass that the lady was again with child. During this pregnancy she remained in hiding in Alberbury. She soon discovered, however, that she was under surveillance by the King's men, so she fled secretly to Shrewsbury. At that point, she was so big with child, that she could travel no farther. So she took refuge in the church of Our Lady at Shrewsbury, and there she gave birth to another daughter. At her baptism this baby was given the name Joan, and later in life she was married to Sir Henry de Pembridge. Subsequently, Matilda had still another child, this time a son. He was born in Wales, up in the mountains, and was baptized in a stream which flowed from the Maiden's Well [Fontaine des Puceles]. The mother and child were very weak, for the child was born two months before term. In their weakened condition both had to be carried down from the mountain to a farmhouse, nearby Carreg-y-nant ['stone by the stream' — a common Welsh name]. When the child was later healthy enough to be confirmed by the Bishop, he was called Fouke.<sup>1</sup>

When the King saw he could in no way avenge himself upon Fouke, nor disgrace or take his wife, he sent a letter to his own brother-in-law, Prince Lewys. In the letter he begged Lewys to remove from his household his mortal enemy, the felonious Sir Fouke. Should he comply, John promised in return that he would restore all the lands which the King's ancestors had ever taken from his lordship. The single condition was that he must deliver Sir Fouke's body. The Prince called his wife Joan into his chamber and showed her the letter which the King, her brother, had sent him. When the lady had heard the letter, she immediately sent a full report of it to Sir Fouke, thereby informing him that the King wished to come to terms with her husband. Fouke was distressed at this news and feared treason. His first reaction was to protect his wife, dame Matilda. In the company of Baldwin de Hodenet she was sent secretly to the Bishop of Canterbury. Following that mission, Baldwin was to meet him again at Dover.

Fouke and his four brothers, along with Audulph and John de Rampayne, armed themselves fully and set out with all their men for Castle Bala to speak to Prince Lewys. Fouke said to him: "Sir, I have served you loyally to the best of my ability, but these days a man does not know whom to trust. For, on the mere promise made by the King, you wish to abandon me. I am all the more fearful, sir, since I know that the King has sent that promise in a letter which you have concealed from me." "Fouke," the Prince replied, "stay with me; for assuredly I plan to do you no treason." "Indeed, sir," said Fouke, "even though I can believe your word full well, I will not remain on any account." At that he and all of his companions took leave of the Prince. From Castle Bala he journeyed

---

<sup>1</sup> I have reversed the order of the last two sentences in this paragraph for the sake of clarity.

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

night and day until he arrived in Dover. There he met up with Baldwin, who had taken his wife Matilda to stay in safety with the Archbishop. They put to sea and arrived in France at Whitsuntide.

When they got near to Paris, Fouke and his men saw a tournament underway. King Philip of France had come into the fields to watch his French knights in action. Fouke himself was still disguised, as were his companions. When they saw such a fair assembly, they tarried to see the jousts. Noting the presence of some English knights, the Frenchmen exerted themselves much the more to do well. Then Sir Druz de Montbener, a very proud Frenchman, sent word to Sir Fouke asking that he come joust with him. Fouke immediately accepted the invitation. Fouke and his brothers armed themselves and mounted their war-horses. John de Rampaigne was richly attired, mounted on a fine charger. At the entrance to the tilting fields John gave a drum-beat on the tabor he was carrying. The tabor beat was so loud that the hills and the valleys resounded, causing the horses to caper. Then, when the King saw Sir Fouke in full battle dress, he said to Sir Druz de Montbener: "Take heed, sir, for it is quite obvious that this English knight is very valiant." "Sire," he replied, "there is not a knight in all the world whom I would not dare to take on man-to-man, either on horse or on foot." "May God be with you!" said the King.

Fouke and Sir Druz spurred their horses and engaged the combat. Fouke pierced his opponent's shield with his lance, which also sliced through the knight's hauberk and into his shoulder. The blow hit with such force that the lance flew into pieces. Sir Druz ended up flat on the ground. Fouke then led the riderless horse back to Sir Druz and offered it to him as a present. For Sir Fouke had no desire to keep the horse as a prize of battle. A second French knight immediately came forward ready to avenge Sir Druz. He struck such a blow with his lance that it went clear through Fouke's shield. Fouke struck back, hitting his attacker on the helmet with such a blow that his lance broke up into fragments. The knight also lost his balance and fell from his saddle. Fouke's brothers and companions stood ready to joust, but the King would not permit it. Instead, he spurred his horse in Fouke's direction. "English knight," he said, "a blessing upon you, for you have done exceedingly well." The King then graciously requested that Fouke remain with him. He was very thankful for the offer and consented to stay at the King's pleasure. Fouke had such grace that he was held to be the finest of knights and without peer. From that day forward the English knight was held in highest esteem by many in France and was praised everywhere he went for his courage, chivalry, and prowess.

Fouke remained for some time in France and was loved and honored by the King and Queen and all the gentry. When the King asked him what his name was, Fouke told him that he was called Amys del Boys. "Sir Amys," said the King, "do you know Fouke Fitz-Waryn, of whom so much good is spoken everywhere?" "Yes, sire, I have seen him quite often." "And what is his stature?" "Sire, in my opinion, he is about the same height as

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

I am." "That he may well be, for you are both valiant men." Fouke traveled all over France to jousts and tourneys. Everywhere he went he was praised, loved, and honored for his prowess.

The King of England finally learned that Fouke was residing with King Philip of France. He sent a letter to the King respectfully requesting that Sir Fouke Fitz-Waryn, his mortal enemy, be expelled from Philip's household. When the King of France heard the letter read, he swore by Saint Denys that no such knight was in his retinue. This was in effect the answer he sent back to the King of England. Sir Fouke in turn heard the news and went directly to see the King of France to announce his imminent departure. "Tell me what prompts your sudden decision," said the King. "I will make full amends for any failing on my part which might have occasioned your desire to leave me." Fouke replied simply: "Sire I have heard news that compels me to set out with all due haste." At these words the King understood immediately his real identity. "Sir Amys de Boys," said the King, "I believe that you are in fact Fouke Fitz-Waryn." "Yes, my lord, I am indeed." The King then pleaded: "Stay here with me, and I will give you richer lands than any you have ever had in England." "With due respect, my lord" he responded, "a man who cannot reasonably hold those which are his own by right heritage is unworthy to receive lands as a gift from someone else."

Fouke took leave of the King and headed toward the coast. As he approached he saw some ships afloat on the sea, but there was no wind in the direction of England, although the weather was fair. Fouke saw a mariner, who appeared to be bold and hardy. He called out to him: "Sir, is that your ship?" "Yes, indeed, sir," came the reply. When asked his name the mariner answered: "Sir, I am Mador of Mont de Russie, where I was born." "Mador," said Fouke, "how well have you mastered your trade? Are you able to take passengers by sea into various regions?" "Frankly sir, there is no known land within Christendom to which I do not know how to take a ship safely." "Assuredly," said Fouke, "yours is a very perilous trade. Tell me, brother Mador, of what death did your father die?" Mador answered that he had drowned at sea. "How did your grandfather go?" "In the same way." "How about your great-grandfather?" "In like manner, as did all my relations, to the fourth generation, as far as I know." "Truly," said Fouke, "it is very foolhardy of you to venture out to sea." "Why indeed, sir? Every creature shall have the death that is destined for him," said Mador. "Now then, if you please, answer my question. Where did your father die?" "In his bed, of course." "Where did your grandfather die?" "In the same place." "And your great-grandfather?" "Certainly, all of my lineage, as far as I know, died in their beds." "Assuredly, sir," said Mador, "since all your kindred have died in their beds, I am much astonished that you dare go near any bed." At that Fouke was forced to concede that the mariner had told him a simple truth. Every man shall have such a death as is appointed him; and he does not know whether it shall be on land or on sea.

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

Judging that Mador well understood the business of ships, he contracted with him to have a ship planned and built, and promised to meet all the expense involved. Mador agreed and the ship was made in a forest near the sea, according to the mariner's own specifications. All the ropes and other tackle with which Mador outfitted the vessel were of exceptional quality. It was an exceedingly well-provisioned ship.

Fouke, his brothers, and all his retinue put out to sea and drew near the coast of England. Mador saw a well-manned ship coming towards them. When the ships drew near each other a knight on board called out to Mador: "Mariner, who owns the ship which you are steering, and what is her provenance? For it is an unfamiliar vessel in these waters." "The ship is my very own, sir," said Mador. "By my faith!" the knight retorted, "In no way is that so. You are thieves, and I know it by the quartered sail, which bears the arms of Fouke Fitz-Waryn. He must be on board the ship, and this very day I will deliver his body up to King John." "Well indeed," said Fouke, "you will do no such thing. Should you, however, want some of our provisions, you are welcome to them gladly." "I prefer instead to take all of you," he said, "and whatever belongs to you, with or without your consent." "On that account you are sadly mistaken," said Fouke. Mador, who was an excellent mariner, let out his sails and steered his ship directly into the path of the other vessel. He cut the other ship cleanly in two, so that the sea poured into its hold. Fouke and his companions immediately boarded the ship after it was struck. They plundered the contents, including all the food, and carried the booty back onto their own ship. The enemy vessel was destroyed, but many a hard blow was struck first. The other ship then disintegrated and sank to the bottom.

For an entire year Fouke continued sailing just off the coast of England. He sought to bring harm to no one other than to King John. On many occasions he seized the King's property and whatever else of his he could find. Finally, the ship set sail for Scotland, but a strong west wind forced them to continue on for three additional days' journey, well beyond their intended destination. A very beautiful island appeared in the distance, and as they drew near it they found a good port. Fouke and his four brothers, along with Audulph and Baldwin, went ashore to see the country and find food for their ship. Their first encounter was with a young shepherd, who came forward to greet them in very bad Latin. Fouke asked him if he knew whether there might be any provisions for sale in the country. "Truly sir, none at all," he said. "For this is an island inhabited by very few people, and those who do reside here live only off their animals. But if you will please come with me, such food as I have, I am willing to share with you." Fouke thanked the lad and followed along as he led them down into an underground cavern, which was very beautiful. The shepherd asked them to be seated and otherwise received them graciously. He then told them he had a servant on a nearby hill. "Please, do not be annoyed," he said, "if I blow my horn to summon him. That way we will be able to dine more quickly." "Please do so, in God's name!" said Fouke. The young man went outside the cavern and

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

blew six blasts before returning into the cavern.

Forthwith six tall and fierce peasants arrived, dressed in coarse and dirty tabards. Each one was carrying a strong, hard club. When Fouke saw them he immediately suspected mischief. The six peasants went into a chamber, took off their dirty tabards and replaced them with much richer cloth of a fine green color. Their shoes were ornamented with gold, and in all their attire they were as richly dressed as any King might be. Returning to the hall, all six respectfully greeted Sir Fouke and his companions. Their first request was that rich chessboards with pieces made of fine gold and silver be brought to them. The guests were all invited to play. Sir William played a game, but he lost it immediately. Sir John played another, and in no time he too lost. Philip, Alan, Baldwin, and Audulph, one after the other played, and each in turn lost the game. Then one of the haughtiest shepherds said to Fouke, "Will you play?" "No," he answered. "Indeed, sir," said the shepherd, "you shall either play chess or you will have to wrestle with me. You have no other choice." "By my faith," said Fouke, "you are a villainous shepherd and a liar. Since I am forced either to wrestle or play chess despite myself, I choose instead to play the game I know best." So he leaped up, drew his sword, and struck such a blow that the shepherd's head flew into the middle of the room. A second, then a third one met a similar fate. Fouke and his companions ended up killing all those peasant scoundrels.

Fouke then entered a chamber where he found an old woman sitting. She was holding a horn which she tried repeatedly to put up to her mouth, but she had not the strength to blow it. When she saw Fouke she begged for mercy. He asked her of what use the horn might be if she could blow it. The old woman answered that if the horn were blown, help would come immediately. Fouke took the horn from her and went into another chamber. There he found seven beautiful damsels, dressed very richly, who were doing fine hand work. When they saw Fouke they threw themselves on their knees and cried for mercy from him. Fouke asked them where they were from, and one of them said: "Sir, I am the daughter of Aunflor of Orkney. My father is resident in one of his castles in Orkney, called Castle Bagot, which is in a very beautiful forest near the sea. One day I and my maidens, with four knights among others, took a boat and went for a pleasure ride on the sea near my father's castle. As we were sailing, the seven sons of the old woman, whom you just saw with her horn, attacked us from a well-manned ship. They killed all our people and brought the survivors here. Against our consent they have repeatedly ravished our bodies, and heaven is our witness! Wherefore we pray, in the name of the God in whom you believe, to save us from this misery. Please, help us to escape from here, if you can. Judging by your appearance, I perceive that you are not from this country." Fouke comforted the damsels, assuring them that he would help them to the best of his ability.

During their search for provisions Fouke and his men also found great treasure, including armor. Fouke kept for himself a rich haubergeon which he came to love so much that he often wore it secretly. During the rest of his life he would neither give it

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

away nor sell it at any price.

Fouke first provisioned his ship liberally and placed the damsels on board, comforting them as best he could. Then he commanded all his men to arm themselves quickly. When all were ready, Fouke sounded the little horn that he had taken from the old woman. More than two hundred robbers from all over the countryside came running through the fields. There were no other inhabitants on the whole island except robbers and thieves. They lived there as pirates venturing forth from their haven to kill whomsoever they could reach upon the sea. Although they defended themselves vigorously Fouke and his company immediately fell upon these robbers and killed more than two hundred of them.

*[Fouke travels to the Orkneys to return the damsels to their homes. He then sails to the seven islands of the ocean, including Ireland, Gotland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, where none dwell but horned serpents and venomous beasts with mastif heads, driven from Ireland by St. Patrick. Caught in a tempest, he's driven through ice-filled waters to Carthage, where Fouke rescues a duke's daughter from a dragon. The duke offers the daughter in marriage, a gift which Fouke would gladly have received were he not already married and a Christian (Hathaway, p. 45, line 7, to p. 48, line 34.)]*

Fouke and his companions at last sailed towards England. When they came to Dover they went inland, but first making certain that Mador remained with the ship at a safe location where they could find him whenever they might need him again.

Fouke and his companions had learned from the peasants that King John was presently at Windsor, so they made their way secretly in that direction. During the day they slept and rested themselves, while during the night they went on until they came to the forest. Since they were already very familiar with the area, they easily found a place to hide, for Fouke knew well every part of Windsor Forest. When they heard a horn sounding, Fouke and his companions armed themselves for a skirmish, for they realized immediately that the King's hunters and beaters were getting ready for a hunt. Fouke swore an oath that fear of death would not deter him from taking revenge on the King, who by force had wrongfully disinherited him. He would thus challenge the King to restore his rights and his heritage. Fouke decided to act on his own, so he told his companions to remain where they were. Having said this, he set out alone to seek adventure.

Fouke's first encounter was with an old charcoal-burner carrying a shovel, dressed all in black, as becomes a collier. Fouke kindly asked him to give him his clothes and his shovel. "Willingly, sir," he said. In exchange, Fouke gave him ten besants [Byzantine gold coins], and asked him to tell this to no one. The charcoal-burner went his way; Fouke stayed there and immediately put on the clothes which the collier had given him. He then saw to his coals and began to stir the fire. There was a large iron fork that he used to arrange the logs on one side and the other.

### *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

King John soon arrived on foot accompanied by three knights and saw Fouke tending the fire. Fouke immediately recognized the King; and, throwing down his fork, saluted his lord by falling humbly to his knees before him. The King and his three knights laughed and made great sport over the politeness and demeanor of the charcoal burner. After standing there for a long time, the King said: "My good peasant, have you seen a stag or doe pass this way?" "Yes, my lord, some time ago." "What kind of an animal did you see?" "One with long horns, my lord." "Where is it now?" "Sire, I can very easily lead you where I saw it, but I ask your permission to allow me to take my fork. For if it were stolen it would be a great loss to me?" "Yes, peasant, if you like, go on and we will follow you."

Carrying his big iron fork, Fouke conducted the King to an excellent place from which to shoot. The King was a very good Bowman. "My lord," said Fouke, "would you like me to go into the thicket and direct the animal to come this way?" "Yes, indeed," said the King. Fouke leaped into the thick of the forest, and summoned his band hastily to take King John. "Be quick, for I have led him here with only three knights. Come while all of his retinue is still on the other side of the forest." Fouke and his band rushed out of the thicket and quickly captured the King. "Now, sire," said Fouke, "I have you at last in my power. Shall I pass such a sentence upon you as you would upon me if you had taken me?" The King trembled in fear, for he greatly dreaded Fouke. Fouke swore that he should die for the great damage and the disinheritance that he had inflicted upon him and upon many a good man in England. The King cried for mercy, and in God's name, begged for his life. He promised that he would restore to Fouke his entire inheritance and whatsoever he had taken from him and all his friends. Moreover, he would grant him his friendship and peace for ever. To that end, John pledged to abide by whatever guarantees of security Fouke himself might decide appropriate. Fouke accepted the King's offer on one condition. In the presence of all the knights here present, he would have to give his solemn word to keep this covenant. The King pledged solemnly that he would keep faith with Fouke. He was overjoyed to be able thus to escape so easily.

Upon his return to the palace, King John assembled his knights and his retinue and told them in detail how Sir Fouke had deceived him. Since his solemn oath was made under duress, he had no intention whatever to keep it. He therefore commanded all to arm themselves in haste and capture these felons while they were still in Windsor Forest. Sir James of Normandy, who was the King's cousin, requested that he be placed in the vanguard. He claimed that the English, at least all the nobles, were cousins to Sir Fouke, hence they were most probably traitors to the King and would not help take these felons. Randolph, the Earl of Chester, protested vehemently. "In faith, sir, with due respect to the King, but not to you, that is a bold lie." He would have punched him in the face, had the Earl Marshal not restrained him. He claimed that they were not now nor ever had been traitors to the King or to anyone else. Furthermore, he reminded Sir James firmly

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

that many nobles here present, including the King himself, were cousins to Sir Fouke. The Earl Marshal interrupted, saying: "Let us go after Sir Fouke. Then the King will see for himself who might be holding back for reasons of family ties." Sir James of Normandy and his fifteen knights armed themselves splendidly all in white armor and nobly mounted on white steeds. This nobleman hastened forward with his company in quest of fame.

John de Rampaigne had overheard all these proceedings and reported them back to Sir Fouke, who concluded that there was no means of escape open to him other than to fight. Sir Fouke and his companions thus armed themselves well and boldly took on Sir James in battle. They defended themselves vigorously and killed all their opponents except four, who were seriously wounded. Sir James himself was taken prisoner. Sir Fouke and his men immediately put on the arms of Sir James and the other Normans. They also mounted the healthier white horses, for their own horses were tired and lean. Tying his mouth so that he could not speak, they dressed Sir James in the arms of Sir Fouke, including the helmet, and rode towards the King. When the King saw them approaching he immediately recognized them by the arms. He believed that Sir James and his men were bringing back Sir Fouke.

Sir James was delivered to the King, with the prisoner being identified as Sir Fouke. At this news, both the Earl of Chester and the Earl Marshal were deeply saddened. Assuming that he was in fact addressing Sir James, the King presently commanded him to kiss him. Sir Fouke replied that, because he was in such haste to follow the other Fitz-Waryns, he had not time enough even to take off his helmet. So the King dismounted from his good horse and ordered James (i.e., Fouke) to mount it, for it was a swifter one for pursuing his enemies. Sir Fouke got down from his own horse and mounted the King's steed. When he finally rejoined his companions, they all fled to a spot some six leagues farther away. Safe at last, they disarmed themselves in a thicket and tended to their injuries. They bound up the wounds of William Fitz-Waryn, whom they considered as dead, for he had been severely wounded by one of the Normans. All his companions shared Fouke's deep grief over his brother's fate.

Meanwhile, the King proceeded to order that Sir Fouke be hanged. Sir Emery de Pyn, a Gascon who was a relative of Sir James, stepped forward and said that he would see to the hanging himself. He took charge of the prisoner and, leading him off a short distance, made him take off his helmet. He saw immediately that it was not Fouke. With his mouth unbound, Sir James was at last able to explain what had happened. Emery brought Sir James back to the King and reported what Sir Fouke had done. When the King realized that he had been thus deceived he was furious. He swore an oath that he would stay armed in his hauberk until such time as he had taken these traitors. Fouke knew nothing of the King's oath.

The King and his nobles pursued Fouke's band by following the tracks left by their horses until they reached the wood where Fouke was hiding. When Fouke saw them

### *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

coming, he stood disconsolate, lamenting for his wounded brother, William. He felt that all was lost. William begged them to cut off his head and take it with them. That way, when the King arrived, he would not be able to identify William's body. Fouke refused the request. With warm tears streaming down his face, he prayed for God's mercy and help. No one has ever seen greater sorrow than that shared between these two brothers.

Randolph, the Earl of Chester, led the assault. Upon seeing the Fitz-Waryns, he commanded his troops to halt. He went on alone to beg Fouke, for the love of God, to surrender himself to the King. If he did so, Randolph gave his word of guarantee for safe passage, assuring him further that he would be reconciled with the King. Fouke replied that he could not do so for all the gold in the world. "My dear cousin," said Fouke, "for the love of God I beg your help for my brother lying here near death. Promise me that after he dies you will make certain that his body is buried, so that wild beasts do not devour it. Please do likewise for the rest of us when we too are dead. For now, go back to your lord the King, and do his service without hesitation or regard for us who are related to you by blood. We will stay to face the destiny which awaits us here." Very sadly, the earl returned to join his companions. Fouke remained there weeping greatly, out of pity for his brother, whom of necessity he would be compelled to leave there to die. He could do little more than pray that God come to their aid.

The earl ordered the assault, and his men attacked in full force. Randolph himself fell upon Sir Fouke, but lost his horse in the attack, during which most of his retinue was killed. Fouke and his brothers defended themselves doggedly. Sir Berard de Blois came up behind Fouke and struck him with his sword on the side, thinking that he had killed him. Fouke, however, turned on his assailant and struck back, hitting him on the left shoulder with his sword grasped in both hands. Cut through to the heart and lungs, Berard fell dead from his horse. Fouke had bled so much, however, that he slid down upon the neck of his horse, and the sword fell from his hand. Saddened by this turn of events, the Fitz-Waryns rushed to the aid of their wounded brother. John leaped behind Fouke on the horse and held him up so that he could not fall. They all then took to flight, for their forces were overwhelmed. The King and his men rode in pursuit, but were unable to overtake them. All that night they went on thus, till in the morning they came to the spot on the coast where they had left Mador the mariner. When Fouke revived, he asked where he was and whether he had been taken prisoner. His brothers comforted him as best they could, and put him to bed in the ship. John de Rampaigne tended his wounds.

After the fighting, the Earl of Chester looked out on the field of battle. He saw that he had lost many of his own people, but he also remembered Fouke's earlier request. So, when he came upon William Fitz-Waryn nearly dead, he had the body sent to a nearby abbey to be nursed. At length William was discovered there. Forthwith the King had him transported in a litter to Windsor Castle, where he was promptly thrown into a dungeon.

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

King John was exceedingly angry with the Earl of Chester for having concealed his charitable action. "Fouke too is mortally wounded," said the King, "but at least I have one of his family here now. The other Fitz-Waryns will be my prisoners too before they know it. To be sure, pride is at the heart of the matter, for had not it been for his excessive pride Fouke would still be alive. While he lived, there was no better knight in the whole world, hence his death is an even greater loss."

In the sea near the coast of Spain there is an island called Beteloye. It is closed in with high rocks, and there is only one entrance. Neither man nor beast dwells on this island, which measures half a league in length and an equal distance in breadth. On the seventh day of their voyage Fouke and his companions arrived at this island. Fouke was at last able to find rest. For the six days of the sea voyage he had been unable to sleep. While his brothers and the others went off to explore the land, he himself remained alone asleep on the ship. Suddenly, a terrible wind came up and broke the cords of the ship, even though it was firmly anchored to a rock. The ship was carried out onto the high sea. When Fouke finally awoke he saw the stars in the night sky. He called his brother John and his other companions, but no one answered. Slowly he became aware that he was alone on the sea and began to curse his cruel destiny. As he wept for his lost brothers, sleep overcame him at last. Soon afterwards his ship arrived in the land of Barbary at the city of Tunis.

At that time Messobrin was the King of Barbary. In the company of four other Kings and six emirs, who were all Saracens, he was standing in a tower overlooking the sea. When he saw this amazing galley approaching his land, the King ordered two soldiers to go and see what it was. The soldiers boarded the ship, finding nothing except one knight asleep. One of them kicked Fouke and ordered him to awake. The frightened knight leaped up and struck the soldier such a blow with his fist that he fell overboard into the sea. The other one fled to report to the King what had happened. A hundred knights were promptly dispatched by the King to take this ship and bring the knight to him. Well armed, the hundred knights surrounded the ship and assailed it from all sides. Fouke, even though badly outnumbered, defended himself bravely, but at last was forced to surrender. This, however, he did under very favorable conditions. For, when he was brought to the palace, Fouke was taken to one of the royal chambers. There, by order of the King, he was to be well attended.

Isorie, the King's sister, was a very beautiful and gentle damsel. She often came to visit Fouke and bring him comfort, because she had noticed that he had a bad wound in his side. She graciously asked him to tell her his name and where he was from, as well as how he had come to be wounded. He told her his name was Maryn le Perdu [Lost Sailor] of France. He was deeply in love with the daughter of an earl in his home country. The lady seemed to return his affection, but she apparently loved another even more. "And it happened that one day she and I met for an amorous tryst. As she was holding me in her

### *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

arms very closely, the other man whom she loved more arrived. He struck me with his sword here, in my side, and put me onto a galley for dead. The ship set out to sea and brought me to these parts." "This damsel was certainly not very courteous," Isorie remarked, as she picked up a richly ornamented harp. Her songs and melodies were her way of bringing solace to this handsome knight, whom she could see was of truly courtly bearing.

Fouke asked lovely Isorie what was all the commotion before the King in the great hall. "I will tell you, indeed," she said. "In the province of Murcia in Iberia there lived a nobleman, the Duke of Cartagena, who had a very beautiful daughter, Ydoyne. While her father was alive, she dwelt with him in his castle in Cartagena. One day a dragon came and carried her to a high mountain in the sea. There he kept her for more than seven years, until a knight of England, called Fouke the son of Waryn de Metz [Mees], came to the mountain and slew the dragon, thereby restoring the maiden to her father. Shortly afterwards the duke died and his daughter ruled over the duchy. My brother, the King of Barbary, sent messengers to her, offering to take her as his wife, but she refused him. Feeling shame at the refusal, the King reacted by assembling an army which destroyed Ydoyne's cities and overthrew her castles. The damsel fled abroad to seek reinforcements. She has now returned with her own large contingent of troops and has begun fiercely to wage war upon my brother. To end this struggle she proposes rules of battle whereby two champions, to be chosen from the two armies now set against each other, will square off against one another. If her chosen knight is conquered, she accepts to give up her duchy and go with Messobrin to Barbary. If ours is beaten, however, my brother the King must entirely restore to her all the land he has taken."

That was the context of the deliberations you overheard earlier today in the great hall, upon the arrival of some messengers sent by Ydoyne. Would that it pleased the God Mahomet that you were such a one as dared undertake the battle on the part of my brother the King! For you would earn great honor in doing so." "My lady, I am greatly indebted to my lord the King, and especially to you; but I could never undertake battle for a Saracen against Christians. I would rather die first. But if the King would renounce his law, be baptized and become a Christian, on such conditions I would, however, accept to undertake the battle as his champion. If I succeed, this land and its people will be saved. The King will, moreover, finally have this damsel of whom you have spoken." Isorie ran immediately to report to her brother Messobrin, the King of Barbary, all that Fouke, who called himself Maryn le Perdu of France, had told her. The King accepted the generous offer unconditionally, promising to follow any orders Fouke might give, if he could but accomplish all that he had promised!

The day of the battle was appointed. The King and his emirs, along with the Berbers and all his other people, came forward, very well armed to face Ydoyne and her troops. Sir Fouke had been provided with rich arms, and Isorie herself graciously attended him.

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

When all was ready, the King put forward his champion knight (Fouke) to do battle, and the duchess put forward hers. The two bold knights spurred on their horses and exchanged lance blows such that the splinters flew all over the field. Then they drew their swords and had go at each other bravely. Fouke struck his opponent's horse such a blow that it fell dead, although he would have preferred to hit the knight instead. When the knight hit the ground he shouted: "Wicked heathen, evil Saracen of pagan faith, may the God of Heaven curse you. Why have you killed my horse?" Fouke dismounted, and the two knights continued their fierce combat well into the evening.

At last the knight asked Fouke: "You, sir, may be a pagan, yet you are strong and noble. Please tell me where you were born." "If you want to know my country of birth I will not tell you, unless you tell me first about yours. Only then will I reply to your question." The knight said that he was a Christian born in England, the son of Waryn de Metz. His name was Philip the Red. He recounted his whole life and that of his brothers in great detail, telling how the duchess had come in a ship to the island of Beteloye and had rescued them. They had been stranded on that island half a year or more. Almost to the point of starvation, they were even forced to eat their own horses. "And when the countess saw us, she knew immediately who we were, and provided us with all the food we needed. She told us that she had just come from England, where she had gone in search of us to help her carry on her war against the King of Barbary. So, there you have a full account of the hard life we have led." At that point Fouke interrupted: "Dear brother, Philip the Red, do not you know me? I am your brother Fouke." "You, sir, are a Saracen; you cannot be my brother. You are trying to deceive me; by God you shall not do so!" Then Fouke showed him something, saying: "Here is a sign." Philip recognized it at once. There was great joy all around, and the battle was adjourned till the following day. Philip explained to the duchess that it was his brother Fouke with whom he had been fighting. Then Fouke, Philip, and their other brothers took counsel with Messobrin. He and all his household were baptized, and the King married the duchess with great honor.

Fouke, his brothers and their men stayed for some time with the King in order to make proper preparations for their return voyage to England. The King gave them gold, silver, horses, arms, and all the luxury goods which they might desire. They filled their ship with such riches that it was a wonder to behold. When they arrived secretly in England, Fouke arranged to have John de Rampaigne go disguised as a merchant to locate King John and find out whether his brother William were alive or not. John dressed himself in the clothes of a rich merchant and went to London. There he made the acquaintance of the mayor and all his household. He gave them such rich gifts that he was even invited to live in the mayor's house, where he was attended to as a wealthy guest. Taking advantage of this privileged status, John asked the mayor to arrange an audience with the King so that he might seek royal favor in allowing his ship's cargo to be unloaded in England. Although he spoke bad Latin, the mayor understood him very well.

## *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

So the mayor brought the merchant before King John at Westminster. He greeted the King very courteously in his own language. The King understood his words and asked him who he was and his country of origin. "Sire, I am a merchant from Greece. I have been in Babylon [i.e., the medieval city of Old Cairo], Alexandria, and Greater India. I have a ship laden with heavy merchandise, including rich cloths, jewels, horses, and other valuables, which might be of great value in your realm." "It is my pleasure," said the King, "that you and your people should be free to land in my country. I grant you my surety." The merchant, together with the mayor, was invited to remain and eat at the King's table.

Two sergeants-at-mace soon entered, bringing into the hall a tall knight with a long black beard and poorly clothed. They led him to the middle of the room and gave him some food. When the merchant asked the mayor who this was, he was told that it was a knight named Sir William Fitz Waryn, and was given the poor man's full story and that of his brothers. Upon hearing the man's name, John was overjoyed to see him still alive, yet very troubled at heart by the poor man's wretched condition. As soon as it was feasible for him, the merchant hastened to Sir Fouke to report on William's plight. Later he had his ship brought as near to the city as he could.

The following day the merchant took a palfrey, the like of which there was none so handsome in all the kingdom, and presented it to King John, who gladly received this gift so marvelous for its beauty. In fact, the merchant gave so liberally that he won his way into everyone's graces. As a result, he was allowed to do whatever pleased him at the King's court.

One day John went to the court at Westminster accompanied by his men, who had first put on sailors' tunics and armed themselves well. After they were nobly received, they noticed William Fitz Waryn being led by his keepers to the prison. The merchant and his companions took William by force from the guards and carried him toward their boat, which was moored very near the palace. The keepers immediately sounded the alarm and followed in pursuit. But the merchants were well armed and defended themselves bravely. They escaped to their galley, placed William on board, and headed out to sea. No need to ask whether Fouke was delighted to see his brother William and John de Rampaigne, still dressed in his merchant garb. The brothers embraced, and each one told the other a tale of adventures and misfortunes. When the King heard that he had been deceived by the merchant, he thought himself ill used.

Fouke and his companions arrived in Brittany, where they remained with relatives more than six months. At last he made up his mind that nothing would deter him from returning to England. When he got to England, he went straight to New Forest [in Hampshire], where he had often spent time. There he met the King, who was hunting a wild boar. Fouke and his men captured him, along with six of his knights, and brought them back to their galley. The King and all his followers were very frightened by all this.

### *Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

Many heated words were exchanged, but at length the King pardoned them his ill will, and restored all their inheritance. He also promised them that he would proclaim a truce through all England. As a token of good faith that he would indeed fulfill his promise, he left his six knights as hostages until the peace could be proclaimed.

The King returned forthwith to Westminster, where he assembled earls, barons, and the clergy, and told them openly that he had willingly granted his peace to Fouke Fitz Waryn and his brothers, and to all their followers. He ordered that henceforth the Fitz Waryns should be honorably received throughout the realm, since he had decided to grant them once again their entire heritage.

Hubert the Archbishop was delighted at this news. He promptly sent letters to Fouke, to the Earl of Gloucester, to Randolph Earl of Chester, and to Hugh Bigod, Earl Marshal, to come immediately to Canterbury. When they were all assembled, it was appointed that Fouke and his companions should surrender themselves to the King in London.

Fouke with his brothers and the three earls, along with all their forces, equipped themselves as richly as they could and set out for London in noble apparel. They knelt before the King at Westminster, and surrendered themselves to him, upon which the King returned to them all their rightful possessions in England. They were given a royal reception and were invited by the King to stay awhile with him at court, which they did for an entire month.

Then Fouke took his leave and went for a visit with the Earl Marshal, who surrendered to him Ashdown and Wantage in Berkshire and other lands as well. Fouke and his brothers put on full armor and next went to Abingdon [in Oxfordshire], where they removed whatever they could find. These possessions were then taken on to Wantage, which was later to become a market town. The fair that Fouke set up in the town has been held there ever since.

Fouke took leave of the Earl Marshal and went to see Earl Randolph of Chester, who was assembling an army to go to Ireland to defend his rights there. When they got there a great troop of their enemies was waiting for them. The earl commanded his men to take up their arms. Fouke himself set off with three young brothers whom the earl had brought with him. The three young men were of great valor and strength, well armed and mounted on fine horses. Among the enemies facing them stood a hideous giant. He was well armed, black and horrible, twelve feet taller than any other. The giant stepped forward and shouted out: "Earl of Chester, send me the most valiant knight whom you have, to defend your rights." The three youths heard the shout and rushed to engage the giant. He killed them swiftly, one after the other, with the hatchet which he was wielding.

Then Fouke charged forward on his steed and tried to pierce him with his lance; but the giant dodged the blow, striking Fouke instead, such that he almost disabled him. Fearful now, Fouke became very cautious, until he was finally able to smite his opponent

### *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

through the body with his lance. As he was falling down, the giant struck Fouke's horse, severing its two legs. Fouke himself fell to the ground, but quickly leaped up again. He drew his sword and cut off his enemy's head. After the battle, Fouke was later to take this giant's hatchet to his castle at Whittington. For now he helped the Earl of Chester in his conquest of all these lands and castles in Ireland. Sir Randolph stayed long enough in that country to restore his lands, after which he returned to England.

At long last Fouke came to his stronghold at Whittington, the beautiful castle he had built on marshy ground. There once again he found Matilda, his wife, and his children, who greeted him with great joy. Fouke proceeded to have all his treasures brought to Whittington. He gave lands and horses to his servants and friends very liberally, and maintained his land in great honor.

Fouke reflected on the fact that he had sinned greatly against God by killing many men, not to mention his other great misdeeds. So, in order to gain remission for his sins, he founded a priory in honor of Our Lady, of the order of Saint Mary of Grandmont, near Alberbury, in a forest on the River Severn. It is called the New Abbey [Alberbury Priory]. Shortly thereafter, Fouke's wife, Dame Matilda de Caus, died and was buried in this priory. A good while after the death of this lady, Fouke married another very noble woman, Dame Clarice d'Auberville. Both of his wives bore him fair and healthy children.

Fouke's reputation for prowess and goodness was such that his children benefitted greatly from their father's renown. The hand of his daughter Eve, for one, was granted upon formal request of the Prince of Wales [Llewelyn the Great]. She was married with great honor and solemnity to the Prince after the death of his first wife, Dame Joan, who was herself the daughter of King Henry of England. But Llewelyn lived only a year and a half after the wedding. He died and was buried at the Cistercian abbey of Conway [Caernarvonshire]. Eve, who had no children from Llewelyn, was afterwards married to a worthy knight, the Lord of Blancmostiers [either Oswestry or Whitchurch in Shropshire].

One night Fouke and his wife, Dame Clarice, were lying in bed in their chamber. The lady was asleep, but Fouke kept awake reflecting upon his youth, and he repented deeply in his heart for his misdeeds. Suddenly, he saw a wonderful brightness in the room. He wondered what it could be. Then he heard a thundering voice in the air say to him: "God has granted to you, His vassal, a penance which is of greater worth to you here than elsewhere." At these words the lady awoke and saw the great brightness. She covered her face for fear. Then this brightness vanished, after which Fouke never saw anything again. He was to remain blind for the rest of his life.

This Fouke was a good and generous host. He had the path of the royal road changed so that it passed nearby the hall at his manor in Alveston. That way, no stranger should travel by without being offered food, lodging, or other honors which were his to give. Merlin says that:

*Other Outlaw Tales in Prose Translation*

In Great Britain

A wolf shall come from the Blaunce Launde [i.e., Whittington];  
Twelve sharp teeth shall he have,  
Six below and six above.  
He shall have such a fierce look,  
Such strength and power,  
That he shall chase the Leopard  
From the Blaunce Launde.

But now we know that Merlin  
Said this about Fouke Fitz Waryn;  
For each of you must know well  
That in the time of King Arthur  
The place called Blaunce Launde  
Is now named Whittington [Blauncheville].

For in this country was located the beautiful chapel of  
Saint Augustine [of Canterbury],  
Where Cahuz the son of Yvain dreamed  
That he stole the candlestick,  
And that he met a man  
Who wounded him with a knife,  
And wounded him in the side.  
While asleep Cahuz cried so loud  
That King Arthur heard him.  
And when Cahuz awoke from his sleep  
He put his hand to his side;  
There he found the knife  
Which [in his dream] had wounded him.

This is all recounted in the Grail story,  
The book of the Holy Vessel.  
We also learn therein how King Arthur  
Recovered his health and his valor,  
When he had lost all  
His chivalry and his power.

From this very country came the wolf,  
As the sage Merlin said,  
And by his shield  
We have known the twelve sharp teeth.

### *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*

He bore a shield dancetté,  
As the heralds have devised:  
On the shield there are twelve teeth  
Of gules and of argent.  
It is well understood that King John  
May be known as the Leopard,  
For he bore on his shield  
Leopards of beaten gold.

Fouke remained blind for seven years, suffering his penance gladly. Dame Clarice died and was buried at the New Abbey. After her death Fouke lived only one more year. He died at Whittington, and he too was buried with great honor at the New Abbey. His body lies near the altar. May God have mercy on his soul!

And may God have mercy upon all, the living and the dead! AMEN.

