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978-1-108-04872-9 - The Chronicle of Pierre De Langtoft: In French Verse, From the Earliest Period to the Death of King Edward I: Volume 2

Edited by Thomas Wright

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Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, usually referred to as the 'Rolls Series', was an ambitious project first proposed to the British Treasury in 1857 by Sir John Romilly, the Master of the Rolls, and quickly approved for public funding. Its purpose was to publish historical source material covering the period from the arrival of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII, 'without mutilation or abridgement', starting with the 'most scarce and valuable' texts. A 'correct text' of each work would be established by collating 'the best manuscripts', and information was to be included in every case about the manuscripts used, the life and times of the author, and the work's 'historical credibility', but there would be no additional annotation. The first books were published in 1858, and by the time it was completed in 1896 the series contained 99 titles and 255 volumes. Although many of the works have since been re-edited by modern scholars, the enterprise as a whole stands as a testament to the Victorian revival of interest in the middle ages.

The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft

This history of England in Anglo-Norman verse was extremely popular during the first half of the fourteenth century. Composed by Pierre de Langtoft (died c.1305), an English chronicler and Augustinian canon, it was intended for the French-reading aristocracy. Part of the Rolls Series of publications of historical documents, the work was edited by Thomas Wright (1810–77), an antiquarian and historian with a special interest in Old English, Middle English and Anglo-Norman. Wright was also a member of many learned societies, including the Society of Antiquaries and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres of Paris. Volume 2, published in 1868, begins with the coronation of Henry II and ends with the death of Edward I. Langtoft openly shares his virulently nationalistic and anti-Scottish views in the large part of the text devoted to the Wars of Scottish Independence.

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The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft

*In French Verse,
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to the Death of King Edward I*

VOLUME 2

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RERUM BRITANNICARUM MEDII ÆVI.
SCRIPTORES,

OR

CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND

DURING

THE MIDDLE AGES.

19975.

a

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THE CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER
THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

ON the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romàns to the Reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be formed from an accurate collation of the best MSS.

To render the work more generally useful, the Master of the Rolls suggested that the editor should give an account of the MSS. employed by him, of their age and their peculiarities; that he should add to the work a brief account of the life and times of the author, and any remarks necessary to explain the chronology; but no other note or comment was to be allowed, except what might be necessary to establish the correctness of the text.

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The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished ; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

*Rolls House,
December 1857.*

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THE
CHRONICLE
OF
PIERRE DE LANGTOFT,
IN FRENCH VERSE,
FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE DEATH OF KING
EDWARD I.

EDITED

BY

THOMAS WRIGHT, ESQ., M.A., F.S.A., &c.,
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE OF FRANCE,
(ACADÉMIE DES INSCRIPTIONS ET BELLES-LETTRES).

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**P R E F A C E.**  
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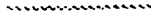
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P R E F A C E.



I HAVE a few remarks to add to what has been said in the Preface to the first volume of this book, chiefly on the subject of different manuscripts containing copies of the text of the Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft. The number of them still existing prove that this work was extremely popular during the first half of the fourteenth century. How far this popularity extended beyond the northern counties it would be difficult to say, as we can trace none of these manuscripts back to the places where they were written. Of one of them, the second manuscript in the College of Arms, which I have called E., I wish especially to speak.

This fine manuscript was evidently made for some man of wealth, who wished to have a consecutive series of what were considered to be the best English history in French or Anglo-Norman verse, and the choice is not an injudicious one. First, we have the Brut, or translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history into Anglo-Norman verse, by the trouvère Wace. Next, we have Gaimar's history of the Anglo-Saxon kings; followed by the Lai of Haveloc, one of the incidents told more briefly in Gaimar's work. These are followed by Pierre de Langtoft's history of the reign of Edward I., which forms the fourth article in the volume. It was only when I came to collate with it the text of this part of the work for the present volume, that I found this

The manu-
scripts of
Pierre de
Langtoft.

The manu-
script be-
longing to
the Herald's
College.

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not to be a copy of Pierre de Langtoft's text, but Pierre de Langtoft very much altered by another hand. Some writer, probably of the earlier part of the reign of Edward III., had found that Langtoft wanted improving, both in substance, and somewhat also in style, and he had undertaken the task, and the result is a revision or new edition so different from the first, that I found it was useless to go on giving the various readings, and that the only way to treat this new text would be to print it entire as a separate work. For examples of these readings I need only refer the reader to the notes to the present volume, pp. 162-170, and add that the variation between the two texts increases as we go on. I have, therefore, thought it advisable to abstain from collating it any further than the mere introductory matter.

A manuscript in the University Library, Cambridge.

The popular songs introduced by Langtoft.

I have omitted in my former preface to mention among the existing manuscripts a good copy found in the University Library, Cambridge, bearing the press-mark Gg. I. i. I edited from this manuscript so far back as 1839, at the end of a volume of "Political Songs" printed by the Camden Society, that part of the text of the history of the reign of Edward I. which contains so many fragments of what appear to have been popular songs on the events of the day, and especially on those of the Scottish wars. The exact character of these fragments is a rather curious question which might perhaps admit of some discussion. They are all composed in the same form of metre, which seems to have been very fashionable at that time, and which was called *ryme couée*, meaning literally, tailed rhyme. It consists of two lines rhyming together, and then a shorter line with a different rhyme, then two lines rhyming together again, followed by another short line which rhymes with the preceding short line. These short lines were the tails; they most commonly rhymed in pairs, so as to form a series of verses formed of stanzas of

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six lines each, resembling some of our old ballad poetry ; but we find sometimes in this form of verse several tail-lines rhyming together. As this is invariably the form of the fragments of English song found in Pierre de Langtoft, and as the author not unfrequently in introducing them changes his own long lines into the same form of verse, we might be led to suspect that they are all part of his own composition, and not old songs taken from popular recitation. But the words with which some of them are introduced leave little doubt as to their real character. Thus, in one place, we are told that Edward fortified Berwick, “in reproof of the Scot, who had sung of him and in mockery made rhymes upon him in English,”¹ and immediately follows the English song in *ryme cowée*. A similar fragment on the battle of Dunbar is introduced by a line evidently intimating that it was a popular song of a satirical description :—“Their deed has turned them to mockery as long as the world shall last.”² The Cambridge manuscript of which I am speaking gives some additional lines of the English fragments, which are not found in the other manuscripts which I have examined, and which seem to leave no doubt of their true character. Thus, at the end of the six lines of English verse given in the present volume, p. 258, the Cambridge adds the following :—

“ He loghe wil him liked,
 “ His paclir es thurck piked,
 “ He wende e were liale ;
 “ Begkot an bride,
 “ Rede him at ride
 “ In the dismale.”

Again, at p. 278, l. 10, of the present volume, the scribe who wrote the manuscript apparently, has changed

¹ See p. 234 of the present volume.

² See the present volume, p. 252.

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the wording of the line, in order to insert some verses of an English song.

“ Cum avaunt estaint, Dunbar les achaseait.

“ For thar wer thai brend,

“ He kauged ham thidre kend,

“ Ant dreved to dote.

“ For Scottes at Dunbar

“ Haved at thayre gau char

“ Schame of thar note.

“ Wer never dogges there

“ Hurlled out of herne

“ Fro coylthe ne cotte.”

In this case we can hardly doubt that the alteration in the French line was made merely for the purpose of introducing these English verses, which are very obscure, and probably corrupt.

Manu-
scripts of
Pierre de
Langtoft
at Paris.

Since writing the preface to the first volume, I have had the opportunity of examining hastily the manuscript of Pierre de Langtoft preserved in the Imperial Library in Paris, and I am now able, through the kindness of my excellent friend M. Paulin Paris, so well known for his valuable labours on the literature of the middle ages, to give a more particular description of it. It would be more correct to call it two manuscripts bound in one volume, for there are two copies of part of the text of Langtoft written by different hands, and of different dates. The handwriting of both is English, and, as the French Library came into possession of them at the time of the suppression of the religious orders in France and the confiscation of the goods of the emigrants, M. Paulin Paris supposes them to have been brought from some one of the abbeys in Normandy. The volume was formerly known as *Supplément Français*, No. 262, but now, since all the different collections have been combined into one, it is numbered as *Fonds Français*, No. 12,154.

The text begins as follows, on the first page of the manuscript; it will be seen at once that it is the second

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part of the Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft, and that the first part, the translation of the Brut, is here wanting.

- “ En les livers Bede des Antiquités,
 “ Sis cens et iii. vinz et iii. auns sunt comptez
 “ Après ke de la Virge Jhesu Crist fu neez,
 “ Quant le rey Kadvaldrus lessa ses regnez
 “ De la Grant Bretayne, dount feust engetez
 “ Par les Saxonays, ke sunt enheritez.
 “ Vers Bretayne la Mayndre en (*sic*) Cadvaldrus passez,
 “ Al riche rays Alaun et à ses parentez ;
 “ De ilokes alait ad Rome cum il fust consailliez.
 “ Sergius la pape le assout de ses pechez,
 “ Cadvardrus en la curt à Deu est comandez.
 “ Le an secund après à le my estez,
 “ Ivor et Hinny, ke furent seus neez,
 “ Sunt venus de Irlande, en Gales arivet,” etc.

In this manuscript each new set of monorimes is headed by a title in Latin, as *De rege Adelelpho*, on fol. 3, or by a date, as at fol. 4, *Anno Domini ccccc*. I presume, from the description of M. Paulin Paris, that this manuscript does not contain all the fragments of English verse. At fol. 35, the song of the Scots at the siege of Berwick is given as follows:—

- “ Li Balyole ad perdu le issue et le entré
 “ De la plus noble vile ke feust en sa poesté.
 “ Le rays Eduard le tent conquise par l'espé,
 “ La fet environner de fosse large et lé,
 “ En reprovant l'Escoce, k'ad de ly chaunté,
 “ Et par moquerye en Englays rymayé :
 “ Pyket him,
 “ And dyket him,
 “ In scoren sayden he ;
 “ He dykes hit,
 “ He pikes hit,
 “ His sal hit be,
 “ Scatered here the Scotas,
 “ Hodred in hoytes,
 “ Never thay ne the.

English
songs given
in the
French
MS.

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“ Rytht if I rede,
 “ Thay touble in Twede,
 “ That woned by the se.”

This part of the manuscript ends, on fol. 38, with the line which represents line 10 on page 278 of the present volume,—

“ Cum avaunt estaynt ; escotés ke ceo dait.”

Fol. 39 begins, in a hand which M. Paulin Paris considers to be a quarter of a century more modern than the other, with the prophecies of Merlin in French, and on the verso of fol. 40 commences (in this same hand) the first division of the work, the translation of the Brut, beginning with the Latin couplet which is found at the end of the poem attributed to Langtoft in MS. A.,¹ written in red:—

“ *Sermo de Bruto fit sub dictamine tuto,*
 “ *Culpa datur Petro deficiente metro.*”

“ Deu le tut puisseant, ke cel e tere creayt,
 “ Adam nostre pere que homme de terre formayt,
 “ Naturement porveust quant il ordinayt
 “ Qe home de tere venuz à tere renterayt,
 “ Cil Deu le beny qe bien escoter dayt
 “ Coment Engleterre primes comencayt,
 “ Et pur quoy primes Bretaygne home l'appellayt.”

This part ends with the verso of fol. 68, with the same series of monorimes as given in our text.²

“ Puis le heure que Brettan Albyon conquist,
 “ E la terre avayt, et les giauns occist,
 “ Et Bretaygne l'apellayt, e habiter le fit,
 “ Jeskes à cel heure que Cadwallain perdist
 “ Le hour de Bretaygne, e nul Bretton remist,
 “ Piers de Langetost trove nient plus par dit

¹ See the Appendix in the present volume, p. 446.

² See p. 262 of the present volume.

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“ K’il n’ad coplye et mys en cel escrit.
 “ Les trofles ad lessé, à verité seprist.
 “ Nul autre trovera home que le list,
 “ Si noun il latiners en son fet mentist.”

This is followed by the Latin verses, given in the note to page 264 of our first vol., beginning,—

“ Finito Bruto, Britones fugiunt religati.”

On fol. 69, r^o, begins another copy of the second division of Langtoft’s Chronicle, which had been given before in a different hand on the first page of the manuscript; and after this, at fol. 100, r^o, the third part of Langtoft, or the history of the reign of Edward I., is continued, and ends on fol. 108, with the same lines which conclude the text in the present volume (p. 382):—

“ Ly roys sire Edward resceyve en sa mercye,
 “ Relesse face de forpez en sa vye,
 “ En regal mansion la mene à compaygnie,
 “ Oû servise n’y ad fors joye et melodie. Amen.”

It will be well to remark that the Cottonian manuscript, from which my text is taken, is not all written by one uniform hand. With the line,—

“ Après la batayle ly rays retornait,”

on fol. 159, v^o, (p. 316 of the present volume), the colour of the ink changes, but the hand seems still to be the same, until we come to fol. 161, v^o. (p. 328 of the present volume), when, with the line,—

“ La Pasche après li reys fist assembler,”

the hand changes altogether, and there is at the same time an evident change in the orthography also. The original hand seems to have returned to it again at the beginning of folio 165, r^o, (p. 346), with the line—

“ Les meyns luy cospeit,”

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and it continues to the beginning of folio 171, when it changes again, and continues changed to the end.

Appen-
dices to
the present
volume.

When we compare together the contents of the different manuscripts in which we find the Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft, we cannot avoid being convinced that most of them were written more or less under political feelings,—that they were made for men who were interested in the great agitation of the Scottish claims and Scottish wars of the first half of the fourteenth century. Hence, several of the manuscripts contain, at the end, after the chronicle, documents of a rather miscellaneous character connected with this agitation. As some of these are very curious, I have thought it desirable to print a selection of such of them as are written in verse by way of appendix in the present volume. I have arranged these documents in the form of four separate appendices, according to their different characters and subjects.

Appendix
I.—Docu-
ments re-
lating to
the inter-
ference of
the pope in
the affairs
of Scot-
land.

Appendix I.—The first of these appendices relates to a curious phase in the Scottish wars under the reign of Edward I. In the year 1300, when king Edward had invaded Scotland with a formidable army, the Scots attempted to ward off the danger by obtaining the protection of the pope, Boniface VIII., and they set up the plea that sovereignty of Scotland belonged absolutely to the Holy see, having been given to it by St. Andrew himself. The pope at first took up the question with warmth; he is pretended to have been influenced in some degree by a considerable advance of Scottish money; he wrote an expostulatory letter to Edward I., setting forth at length his own claims to the sovereignty of Scotland, accused him of setting them at defiance, and admonishing him to desist. Edward called a parliament, which met at Lincoln on the 31st of January 1301, at which the nobles joined in an expostulatory reply to pope Boniface, in which they declared the

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justice of king Edward's claims and their unanimous resolution to defend them. The king himself wrote a letter to the pope, in which he gave a long string of historical evidence to show the antiquity and justice of his own claims. The result was that the pope interfered no further in the matter, under the influence, probably, of other political interests. The Latin texts of these documents are given, perhaps somewhat abridged, in the Chronicle of Matthew of Westminster; and some contemporary or near contemporary of the events to which they relate turned them into French verse in a measure and style similar to those of Pierre de Langtoft. The scribe of the manuscript which I call B. (MS. Reg. 20 A. xi.) has inserted it at the end of Langtoft's work as a continuation of it, and from this, as the only copy with which I am acquainted, I have printed it as the first appendix. Unfortunately this scribe was a very careless one, and besides corruptions of the text which cause obscurity, a line or two are evidently omitted in several places.

Appendix II.—The two poems given in my second appendix are of a somewhat different character, and are inserted here merely because they are the only two other compositions which there appears to be any reason for ascribing to the author of the chronicle, which they immediately follow in MS. A. They have at the end the Latin verses relating to the literary labours of Pierre de Langtoft, so that it is evident that the scribe of this manuscript, which is one of very good authority, believed him to be the author of them. An account of them will be found in the preface to my first volume, p. xiv. I need say no more than that they are very curious examples of a class of literature which was very popular in the middle ages.

Appendix III.—Every man who has studied diligently and minutely the history of the period to which this

Appendix
II.—Poems
ascribed to
Langtoft.

Appendix
III.—Pro-
phesies.

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chronicle belongs is aware of the important role which pretended prophecies, put forth under the names of Merlin, the Sibyls, &c., played in the political struggle. Pierre de Langtoft has inserted the Latin text of the prophecies of Merlin between the first and second divisions of his chronicle, and in most of the manuscripts the work is preceded or followed by a French version of it. Besides this, single prophecies, much more brief in extent, and generally written in a metrical form in order to be more easily carried in the memory, are found scattered not only through these manuscripts, but through many others. They were no doubt used for political purposes. Those which I have printed in this appendix, taken from MS. B., are very curious examples of such prophecies and political verses, but accompanied with translations into French. Their original composition in Latin shows that they were primarily contrived and used by the clergy, and the French translations were intended to facilitate their circulation among the higher classes of the laity.

Appendix
IV.—English prophetic
poem.

Appendix IV.—The longer and more elaborately designed poem in English which forms the last of these appendices belongs to the same class as the scraps given in that which precedes. It was intended of course to be sung by the wandering minstrels, so as to spread the influence of these prophecies among the middle and somewhat lower classes of contemporary society. It is composed in a north country dialect, and is in some places so difficult and obscure that I have not been able to translate them with any confidence.
