

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

AT ITS FORTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 24, 1887,

WITH AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY
1886—1887.

ALSO

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XXIX.

BEING No. 3 OF THE SIXTH VOLUME.

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WITH APPENDIX.



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XII. BIT OF A MIDDLE-ENGLISH ROMANCE IN VERSE.

[CHAUCER'S "TROILUS."] By Prof. Dr GEORGE STEPHENS, Litt.D., F.S.A. Lond. and Edinb.
Communicated by the Rev. Professor SKEAT.

[March 7, 1887.]

THESE little slips of vellum, taken from a bookback, are about 10 inches high by $1\frac{1}{2}$ broad. The MS. would seem to date from about 1400—1450, and has apparently been written in two columns, each containing four stanzas of seven lines each. Double ornamental lines, one red, one blue, have been run between each stanza. As the whole is so fragmentary and sometimes injured, what is left is difficult to copy; many words are doubtful—till we get the context. Temporarily, I take A first, as perhaps the first column of the *recto* folium; then B, as then the 2nd column of the *verso* folium. The rime was, may be, *a, b, a, b, c, d, d.* [Rather, *a, b, a, b, b, c, c.*]

What the subject was, I do not know. It mentions the death of Meleager, and other such Classical legends. I do not remember to have seen it before in English, either as a complete Epical lay or as an episode. But the Editor will kindly elucidate all this, for he has access to the great Cambridge book-board.

[Here follows a reading of the contents of one of the slips; readings of the contents of both slips are given below.]

ADDITIONAL NOTE; BY THE REV. PROF. SKEAT.

To these words of Prof. Stephens, I have to add the following.

The poem is certainly written in the ordinary seven-line stanza, used by Chaucer in his *Troilus and Cressida*, and by Lydgate in his *Falls of Princes*. At first sight, I should have supposed that the fragments really belong to the latter work, but I find that Lydgate gives the story of Meleager in somewhat similar, but decidedly different language, in Bk. ii. ch. 14. As far as I can tell at present, the fragment belongs to a poem hitherto unknown. The writing and composition belong to the fifteenth century. Part of the story is ultimately from the eighth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

I arrange the slips in a different order to that suggested above, and mark them with the numbers 1 and 2. The columns which Prof. Stephens marks as A and B, are what I should call 2 recto, and 2 verso. 1 is legible enough, but the back of it, or 1 verso, is almost wholly blank. The poem was clearly written, I think, in single columns, not double; I know of no instance in which poems in seven-line stanzas are written in double columns on parchment of this length. Still, 1 and 2 are parts of the same leaf. The contents shew that 1 precedes 2, and also immediately precedes it. It is clear that the story alluded to is something like the following.

There is first of all mention of a dream; then the name of Cassandra occurs. Diana is mentioned as being wroth, apparently with the Greeks, because men brought her no incense. She therefore avenged herself. Here come the words "for with a b...", which I take to mean "for with a *bore*," i.e. boar; the allusion being to the boar sent by Diana to the woods of Caledon. We next have the words: "To slay this boar was,"...and we know that the boar-hunter was Meleager. Then we are told that there was a certain maiden; this is Ovid's *Atalanta*. Meleager fell in love with this fresh (i.e. fair) maiden; and

waxed so courageous that he slew the boar. Whence, as the old books say, arose a great strife; in fact, Meleager slew his two uncles, brothers of his mother Althea, as may conveniently be read in Dryden's translation from Ovid of the story of "Meleager and Atalanta." The poet says that the story about Meleager and his mother is too long to recount; however, we know that Althea burnt the fire-brand on the preservation of which her son's life depended. Then come the words "She told eke how;" and the story next alluded to is that of "the strong city," i.e. Thebes, and how Tydeus was sent to claim the kingdom for his comrade Polynices, "the which the brother dan Eteocles full wrongfully of the" crown had bereft. "This tale she told by process," i.e. in due order. She also told how "dan Tydeus" was slain, "and how that seven kings besieged the city all about," and she told also "of the holy serpent, and of the furies all." The rest is quite fragmentary; there is something about a man who wished for some one to expound his dream; and there is the exclamation "O brother dear," apparently uttered by a "sister" mentioned in the preceding stanza, and who perhaps expounds the dream, as requested.

Meagre as these fragments are, there is quite enough to identify the poem to which they belong, if we can once tell where to find another copy in a complete form.

POSTSCRIPT. I have thought it best to leave this nearly as it was written. I have since found that the passages really *do* form a portion of Chaucer's *Troilus*, book v. st. 207—214; and that my tentative arrangement and description are fairly correct. See Chaucer, ed. Morris, vol. v. p. 60.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTENTS.

Strip 1 (recto); a strip at the inner edge of the leaf.

Strip 1 (verso); the same; nearly blank.

Strip 2 (recto); a strip near the outer edge of the leaf.

Strip 2 (verso); the same, turned over.

CONTENTS OF THE LEAF (*recto*); st. 207—210.

<i>Strip 1.</i>	<i>Strip 2.</i>
pis dre ^{me}ha]ue eke byfor ⁿ
May neu ^{er}a]nce
He þou ^{zt} ay...	...l]ady lorne
And þat þat...	...]yance
Hym schew[ed...	...signifiance
Of hyr vn...	au]enture
And þat þis...	...hym [in] figure
For whyche...	...suster sent
þat Called...	...aboute
And al hys...	...h]yr er he stente
And hyr by...	...doute
Of þe stro[n]ge...	...sto[ut]e
And fynaly...	...sto]unde
Cassandre...	...hys dre ^{me} expounde
Sche gan fy...	...o proper dere
3if þou a s...	...knowe
þou most a...	...es here
To purpos ho[w]...	...þrowe
Haþ lo[r]des...	...wiþ-in a þrowe
þou w[e]lle...	...w & of what kynde
He comen is...	...ynde
Dyane why...	...w]as [and in ire]
For Grekes...	...s]acrifice
Ne encens...	...sette afyre
Sche for þa[t]...	...h]yr so despise
Wroke hyr...	...l wyse
For wiþ a b[ore]	...ox in stall
Sche made...	...& v[y]nes all

CONTENTS OF THE LEAF (*verso*); st. 211—214.

Strip 2 (Strip 1 is blank).

T]o slo þis bore was...
 A]monges whyche þer...
 A] mayde on of þis...
 A]nd meleagre lord of...
 He] loued so þis fressh[e *mayden*...
 þa]t wiþ hys manho[de...
 þe] bore he slouȝ & hy[r...

O]f whyche as olde bo[kes
 A]rose a contek & a g...
 A]nd of þis lord descen[ded...
 B]e ligne or elles olde...
 Bu]t how þis Meleag[re...
]en hys moder wyl...
 Fo]r al to long it were...

Sc]he told eke how T[ydeus...
 vn]to þe strong Citee...
 to] claymen kyngdom...
 ...e hys felaw dan p[olimites
 of] which þe broþer dan [eteocles
 fu]l wrongfully of þe...
 þi]s tolde sche by proces...

Sc]he tolde eke how he...
 Wh]an Tydeus slouȝ...
 Sc]he tolde eke al þe prop[hecies...
 An]d how þat .vij. kyn[ges...
 Bes]egeden þe Citee a[l] aboute
 An]d of þe holy serpe[nt...
 And] of þe furies al...

