

E N G L I S H L A N G U A G E.

Hitherto the language used in this island, however different in successive time, may be called *Saxon*; nor can it be expected, from the nature of things gradually changing, that any time can be assigned, when the *Saxon* may be said to cease, and the *English* to commence. *Robert of Gloucester* however, who is placed by the critics in the thirteenth century, seems to have used a kind of intermediate diction, neither *Saxon* nor *English*; in his work therefore we see the transition exhibited, and, as he is the first of our writers in rhyme, of whom any large work remains, a more extensive quotation is extracted. He writes apparently in the same measure with the foregoing authour of *St. Margarete*, which, polished into greater exactness, appeared to our ancestors so suitable to the genius of the *English* language, that it was continued in use almost to the middle of the seventeenth century.

O f þe bataÿles of Denemarch, þat hii dude in þys londe
þat worst were of alle oþere, we mote abbe an honde.
Worst hii were. vor oþere adde somwanne ydo,
As Romeyns & Saxons, & wel wuste þat lond þerto.
Ac hii ne kept yt holde nogt, bote robbÿ, and flinde,
And destrue, & berne, & sle, & ne couþe abbe non ende.
And bote lute yt nas worþ, þey hii were ouercome vlome.
Vor myd slypes and gret poer as prest effone hii come.
Kÿng Adelwolf of þys lond kÿng was tucntÿ ger.
þe Deneÿs come by hÿm rÿuor þan hii dude er.
Vor in þe al our vorst ger of ys kÿnedom
Myd þre & Jrÿttÿ slypuol men her prince hyder come,
And at Souþhamtone arÿuede, an hauene by Souþe.
Anoþer gret oft þulke tÿme arÿuede at Portesmouþe.
þe kÿng nuste wÿþer kepe, at delde ys oft atuo.
þe Deneÿs adde þe mayltre. þo al was ydo,
And by Estangle and Lyndesÿe hi wende vorþ atte laste,
And so hamward al by Kent, & slowe & barnde vaste.
Aȝen wynter hii wende hem. anoþer ger est hii come.
And destrude Kent al out, and Londone nome.
þus al an ten ger þat lond hii broȝte þer doune,
So þat in þe rabe ger of þe kÿnges crone.

Hii come & smÿte an bataÿle, & þere, þoru Gode's grace,
þe Deneÿs were al byneþe, & þe lond folc adde þe place,
And more prowesse dude þo, þan þe kÿng myȝte byuore,
þeruore gode lond men ne beþ nogt al verlore.
þe kÿng was þe boldore þo, & aȝen hem þe more drou,
And ys foure godes sones woxe vaste y nou,
Edelbold and Adelbryȝt, Edelred and Alfred.
þys was a stalwarde tem, & of gret wÿsdom & red,
And kÿnges were al foure, & defendede wel þys lond,
An Deneÿs dude flame ynou, þat me volwel vond.
Is sÿxteþe ger of þe kÿnge's kÿnedom
In eldeste sone Adelbold gret oft to hÿm nome,
And ys fader also god, and oþere heȝe men al so,
And wende aȝen þys Deneÿs, þat muche wo adde y do.
Vor myd tuo hondred slypes & an alf at Temse mouþ hii come,
And Londone, and Kanterburÿ, and oþer tounes nome,
And so vorþ in to Sopereȝe, & slowe & barnde vaste,
þere þe kyng and ys sone hem mette atte laste.
þere was bataÿle strong ynou ysmÿte in an þrowe.
þe godes kÿngtes leȝe adoun as gras, wan medeþ mowe.
Fleneden, (þat were of ysmÿte,) & oþer lÿmes also,
Flete in blode al fram þe grounde, ar þe bataÿle were ydo.
Wanne þat blod stod al abrod, vas þer gret wo y nou.
Nÿs yt reuþe vorto hure, þat me so volc sloi?
Ac our suete Louerd atte laste sſewede ys suete grace,
And sende þe Crÿstÿne Englyſſe men þe mayſtrye in þe place,
And þe heþene men of Denemarch byneþe were echon.
Nou nas þer gut in Denemarch Crÿstendom non;
þe kyng her alter to holÿ chÿrche ys heite þe more drou,
And teþegede wel & al ys lond, as hii aȝte, wel y nou.
Seÿn Swÿthÿn at Wÿnchestre byſſop þo was,
And Alclon at Sÿrebourne, þat amendede muche þys cas.
þe kÿng was wel þe betere man þoru her beȝre red,
Tucntÿ wynter he was kÿng, ar he were ded.
At Wÿncestre he was ybured, as he gut lÿþ þere.
Hÿs tueȝe sones he ȝef ys lond, as he byȝet ham ere.
Adelbold, the eldore, þe kÿnedom of Eſſex;
And supþe Adelbryȝt, Kent and Weſſex.

Ac hii adde alle yþe aſſend, ȝÿf þe nÿȝt made y be.