Cædmon's Exodus and Daniel

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CAEDMON'S

EXODUS AND DANIEL.

Edited from Grein.

BY

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NOTE TO THIRD EDITION.

Long vowels and diphthongs are accented. The Notes, as given in preceding editions, we omit, though we include their essential features in the Glossary. With the generous aid of Professor Harrison, the text has been, once again, thoroughly revised, on the basis of Grein, variant readings being also given. The Glossary, it will be seen, is greatly enlarged: especially, as to definitions, references to text, and quotations of characteristic passages.

In the revision of the Glossary, the editor has been much indebted to Messrs. I. M. Harris and C. L. Crow, students in the University at Lexington, Va.

College of New Jersey,
November, 1887.

T. W. H.
PREFACE.

ONE of the most urgent needs which the recent revival of interest in English Philology has brought to light is that of American editions of the best specimens of First English Prose and Poetry. So difficult of access and so expensive have the German, and even the English, editions been found, that the study of the oldest English has suffered not a little thereby. Nor is it altogether gratifying to the pride of an ingenious American scholar to feel that he should be thus dependent upon foreign sources for the best results in this department. As far as the publication of Middle English Texts is concerned, the main work has been done, and naturally so, by native English scholars, such as Sweet, Earle, Skeat, and Morris, under the auspices of the Early English Text Society and kindred agencies. As to the work of what has been called, The Earliest English Text Society, most has been done by continental and English scholars. Such Danes and Germans as Rask, Bouterwek, and Grein, and such native Englishmen as Thorpe, Bosworth, Arnold, and Kemble, have been foremost in this arduous work. Up to a comparatively recent date, American scholarship had made no contributions to this subject. What was attempted was rather in the line of the elementary than in that of the more advanced and critical. To Professor March of Easton is due the awakening of a genuine interest in all that pertains to English speech, and, more especially, as to its first forms and uses. Since then, more or less of worthy work has been done at home by Corson, Carpenter, Cook, Shute, and others. To Professor Harrison, of Lexington, special need is due in beginning the editing of the best First English Poetry. His recent edition of Beowulf, from the text of Heyne, marks a new departure in the critical study of our mother tongue. It opens the way for a complete series of
editions accessible in American forms, and at moderate cost. The present edition of Cædmon’s Exodus and Daniel is in the way of contribution to this needed work, and is designed, mainly, for use in college classes. There is no part of our oldest poetry as good as Cædmon which is so difficult of access in this country, and of which there is more immediate need. It is gratifying to state that Professors March, Baskervill, and others will take part in the series proposed.

Of the various texts of Cædmon, there are four which any editor must have on his table: Junius, Thorpe, Bouterwek, and Grein. Of these, the last is by far the most valuable, and we shall adopt it as the authoritative text, up to this date. We shall prefer to give Grein’s text precisely as it stands in his Poesie, save that the hyphens between compounds have been omitted, and several errors that have crept into the text have been corrected.

Wülker’s Revision of Grein, so long promised, will soon be completed. This will undoubtedly give us a text superior to any now extant; and, when it appears, may be used by the student in the way of helpful reference.

In addition to the text, with a brief outline of its separate sections, we shall give a brief and yet sufficiently full glossary for the aid of the advanced student.

Much general introductory matter, such as the genuineness of the Paraphrase and kindred topics, we must omit as properly belonging to the editor of Genesis.

If the edition hereby offered aids a whit in the better study of our home speech, and deepens the interest already felt in a knowledge of its first forms, our final end will have been reached.

T. W. H.

Princeton College,
October, 1887.
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

I. CÆDMON.

This "Father of English Song" appears in the earliest English history, and disappears from it, with but a fact here and there to fix his place and work. In the account of Cædmon given us by Alfred, in his translation of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, there are found a few incidents and statements which serve to make up his only biography. It is suggestive to note, that this story in Bede reappears substantially in the Heliand, the Old Saxon Paraphrase of the ninth century. It may further be noted, that the fragment of song given us in this history is probably the most ancient piece of Saxon poetry extant.

From this we learn the following facts: That he was a native of Northumbria, near Whitby, and lived in the seventh century; that he was a convert from Paganism, and a member of the Abbey of Hilda; that he was English in heart and spiritual in life, singing in his native tongue, and always for holy ends; that he was a simple herdsman among his flocks, specially endowed in later life with the divine gift of poesy; that he wrote many poems; that he sang and prayed his life away in the love of God, and died in peaceful triumph about 680 A.D.

All we know of him is, that he was a pious monk, taught of God, full of song and Saxon spirit; and that out of the fulness of his heart, and for the common weal, he sang of Creation and of Christ. Such may be said to be the traditional account of Cædmon.
II. THE PARAPHRASE.

1. Source of the Paraphrase.

This poem by Cædmon, as far as it is extant, is especially important to English scholars in that it marks the very beginning of Anglo-Saxon literature in the seventh century, its close being marked by the completion of the Chronicle in 1154.

As to its source, Bede and Alfred give us all that is to be given. In Thorpe's edition of Cædmon we may find a sufficiently accurate translation of this narrative. If this is not accessible, it may be found in any good history of the Anglo-Saxons or in the Saxon text in March's Reader. The substance of the record in a few words is, that he was an untaught herdsman, ignorant of poetry; that, asleep among the cattle, he heard in his dream a voice bidding him sing; that, refusing, he was again commanded to sing the origin of things, and so began his song. At the request of the abbess, Hilda, he sang before all the learned, and turned into sweetest verse all that they taught him. Forsaking the worldly life, he joined the monks and devoted himself to the work of the minstrel. In this simple manner the origin of the Paraphrase and other poems has come down to later history. Such is the traditional origin of the Paraphrase.

2. Its Metrical Structure and Moral Character.

We find in Cædmon a good example of classic Saxon poetry, a specimen of the language on the basis of which successful study may be conducted. As to the versification, it is that which all our First English Poetry has in common. We note the presence of alliteration, both of consonants and vowels, and the uniform division of the line into two sections (hemistichs), the cæsura falling
between them. We note but few examples of final and perfect rhyme. The prevailing type of verse is the narrative with four feet in each poetic section. The long narrative verse is less frequent. As to accent or syllables determining the verse, we note the emphasis of the former, and this places our earliest poetry in harmony with our best modern poetry.

Centuries ago, Bede stated the principle still in force, that "rhythm depends on the sound and modulation, and not on an artificial government of the syllables."

It may be added that parallelisms, which so mark the structure of Hebrew verse, are a conspicuous feature of the poetry in question, while there is found the same prevalence of metaphor, indirect statement, inversion and abrupt transition that mark all our first poetry.

It is worthy of mention that Mr. Guest, in his English Rhythms, speaks of the special skill with which Caedmon manages his metres.

As to its moral character, the Paraphrase speaks for itself. It is a free poetic rendering of Holy Writ to foster piety in the hearts of the people.

It was the first attempt in English verse to popularize the Bible, and thus places its author in line with the authors of the Old Saxon Heliand, with Orm, Dante, Milton, and Klopstock, and with our own lamented Longfellow. The poem is spiritual throughout, and opens a question ill to solve, as to the presence in a converted pagan of such clear and high views of truth. It would be a study of no little interest to the student of theology to note the manner in which this "good monk of Whitby" paraphrases, in the seventh century, the Scriptural account of the fall of man and kindred doctrines.

There are reformers before the reformation, and Caedmon prepares the way for the great work of Wicliff and his successors.
3. Contents of Paraphrase.

The Hymn and the Vision apart, there are: Book I., Genesis, 2935 lines; Exodus, 589 lines; Daniel, 765 lines. Book II., Christ and Satan, 733 lines. This second book is paraphrased from the New Testament, and is in every way inferior to the first. To these books some editors add, The Song of Azariah and The Song of the Three Children. According to Bede, the Paraphrase is but a part of Cædmon's authorship. With regard to Cædmon and his Poems, modern criticism has modified tradition as follows: (a) That no one of these poems can with certainty be ascribed to Cædmon, though one of them, Genesis A, was probably based on his work. (b) That the name, Cædmon, is applied to the poems, on the ground of convenience. See Wülker's Grundriss, pp. 114, 140.


The history of opinion on this subject is full of interest. As favoring a close relationship, we note the names of Turner, Nicholson, Thorpe, Conybeare, Southey, and Taine, while such cautious writers as March and Morley hesitate not to give this theory the benefit of the doubt. Mr. Disraeli, in his Amenities of Literature, devotes an entire chapter to the subject, and takes strong ground against the theory of literary relation. The final settlement of this question is impossible. The facts are too few to warrant it. Each author had access to the Bible, and to biblical and mythical traditions, and drew from these common sources. The coincidences are striking: each poem is, in a sense, a paraphrase of Scripture; each is an epic and on the same theme; each opens with the same scene, the fall of the angels, and proceeds in a somewhat similar manner. As to Satan's rebellion prior to the creation of man, and his consignment with the fallen angels to