Notes on "The Seven Sages"

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Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Apr., 1921), pp. 166-167

Published by: Modern Humanities Research Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3714913>

Accessed: 06-05-2016 12:19 UTC

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MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

NOTES ON 'THE SEVEN SAGES.'

In Campbell's edition of *The Seven Sages of Rome* (1907), we find a score of *ā*-words in rimes which belong to the Northern dialect and exclude the use of Midland forms with open *ō*. Campbell discusses the Northern forms, and says that the derivatives of *ā* rime 41 times with an *a* having some other origin. His list omits several words with Northern *a* assured by the rimes: *hale* 37, *lardes* 143, *slas* 26, *slane* 53, *throw* 31, *wate* 76¹. It contains many rimes that might have been transposed from Midland forms with *o*. Thus for *lare*·*ware*, the first rime-pair in Campbell's list (p. lxxiii), we can write Midland *lore*·*wore*; such rimes prove no more than *two*·*go* (1) and *twa*·*ga* (12). One of the rimes in Campbell's list, *smate*·*bat* (44), seems to involve a scribal mistake. It occurs in the dialogue that introduces the *fift tale*:

'...it was sene for sertayne
of him pat with his son was slayn :
þe son þe fader hevid of smate.'
'Dame,' he said, 'what was he pat?'

As Campbell remarks in his note, *bat* apparently lacks sense and syntax; but the puzzle is hardly solved by his weak conclusion: *bat* might have been put in to make out a rime. In the dialogue preceding the *sext tale* we find a similar question:

þe Emperoure said: 'What was he?
pat tale, maister, þou most tel me.'

This question may have replaced an older *wha was he?*; but in any case it justifies changing *was...bat* to *was...hat*, equivalent to Midland *was yhoten*². The text commonly keeps *-en* in participles; but the shorter forms occur in rime:

...þaire bolt es ful sone shot,
titter to ill þan til gude note. (26)

...bad þam bete him in þat tide
til blode brast out on ilka side.
He bad, when he was sogat bet,
þai sold him hang on a gebet. (36)

¹ Numbers refer to pages. I leave out the silent *e* sometimes written after inflectional *s*, and distinguish *u* and *v* in accordance with modern usage.

² Emerson, *M.E. Reader* (1916), p. 73.

A similar scribal change of *hat* (< *hātan*) to *bat* may be assumed in the couplet

And þou will mak him þat pine ayre
þat es about ay þe to payre. (80)

Here Campbell would leave out *bat*—thereby putting stresses on the weak words *and, will, him*.

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THE STONYHURST PAGEANTS.

It is not surprising that Dr Greg, in his review¹ of the *Stonyhurst Pageants*, should feel some misgivings about peculiar forms which appear in the printed text of these plays. With regard to the six cases which he queries, however, I would say that only two are typographical errors, and these were duly noted in the Corrigenda. The other four represent the actual readings of the MS. In publishing the text of these plays my first care was to record the exact reading of the MS. even when it was obviously wrong. Errors were in some cases corrected, though never silently. In many other cases—perhaps not altogether consistently—obvious errors were left uncorrected, for my primary aim was to present, not a critical text, but a faithful reproduction of the Stonyhurst MS. The typographical errors recorded in the Corrigenda (p. 6) are fewer than might have been expected, considering the fact that the text was set up by printers who did not understand the English language, and at a time when the sending of proof sheets was in the highest degree difficult and uncertain.

The Stonyhurst text presents many curiosities which it was impossible to discuss within the limits prescribed for the Introduction. When one notes, for example, the frequent omission of final *t* from such words as *eight* (x, 26), *light* (VIII, 677), *sight* (x, 110), *brought* (xiv, 622, 1435; xv, 86), and *sought* (ix, 74), one is moved to inquire whether these forms may not have a phonetic basis, though the extraordinary carelessness of the scribe in omitting letters enforces caution in drawing any inference. Certainly *thath* for *hath* (xiv, 897), *thwice* for *twice* (xiv, 1298), *trough* for *through* (ix, 520), *threatneh* for *threatneth* (VIII, 678), *moyseth* for *moyses* (VIII, 806), *decrare* for *declare* (xviii, 114), and *dwaw* for *draw* (VIII, 109), are to be regarded as scribal slips. Such forms as *pringe* for *bringe* (ix, 286), *plagon* for *flagon* (VIII, 790), and *fongs* for *frogs* (VIII, 421) may at first seem to afford some dialectal

¹ *Modern Lang. Review*, xv, 441.