Three O.E. Textual Notes

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Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan., 1917), pp. 69-72

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713150>

Accessed: 28/06/2014 17:20

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MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

THREE O.E. TEXTUAL NOTES.

(1) According to the first printed edition of the Exeter Book, Thorpe's *Codex Exoniensis* (1842), ll. 176^b–177 of the Gnostic Verses (p. 344) read as follows :

...3if hi sceoldan eofor onzinnan
oppe bezen beran : biþ þæt slīþ-herde deor.

For *slīþ-herde* Thorpe, in a note, suggested *slīþ-he[a]rde* ; he translated the last half-line 'which is a ferocious beast.' Ettmüller and Grein who had no first-hand knowledge of the MS., based their readings on Thorpe ; the former (*Scôpas and Bôceras*, p. 286) accepted *slīþ-he[a]rde*, the latter (*Bibl. der ags. Poesie*, Vol. II, p. 345) preferred the form which Thorpe had given as the MS. reading. In his glossary (*Sprachschatz*, Vol. II, p. 456) he entered *þæt slīþ-herde deor* (urus) under *slīð-heard*, together with *Gen. 378 slīð-hearda sal* ('the very hard rope or chain' with which Satan was bound). He evidently took the form to be a weak nom. sing. neut., preceded by the definite article, as indeed he was bound to do, but we are left in ignorance of what construction he put upon the line. He glossed the word : 'atrox, dirus, gravis, vehemens.' Schipper who collated the MS. in 1870–71 and published a rich yield of corrections in Pfeiffer's *Germania*, Vol. XIX, pp. 327–338, made no remark on our line. And Wülker, after a third collation of the Ex. B. in 1878, gave his authority to *slīþ-herde*, first in *Kleinere ags. Dichtungen*, p. 49, and again in the new edition of Grein's *Bibliothek*, Vol. I, p. 351. Similarly the latest editor of the Exeter Gnomes, Miss Blanche C. Williams, who claims personal acquaintance with the MS., read *slīþ-herde* (*Gnostic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon*, New York 1914, p. 125) and translated 'very fierce,' appending moreover a note (p. 143) '*slīþ-herde deor*, the bear.' All O.E. dictionaries, including the new impression of Grein's *Sprachschatz* (1912) and the recent second edition of Clark Hall's *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*

(1916) follow the textual editions and gloss the word more or less as Grein did in 1864.

In spite of the curious unanimity of the scholars I have mentioned above, the MS. does not read *slip herde*; it reads *slip hende*. The scribe who in 1831-32 made the beautiful facsimile of the Ex. B. for the British Museum (Add. MS. 9067), a work of very remarkable accuracy, read and copied *slip hende*. The true reading is also recorded by Assmann in a list of corrections on the last unnumbered page of Grein-Wülker, Vol. III (1898); but owing to its inconspicuous place, his brief note has been entirely overlooked. Finally I have myself, on a recent examination of the famous codex at Exeter, found the reading to be, as plainly as possible, *slip hende* (fol. 92^a, l. 2)¹.

Slip-hende, the correct MS.-reading, restores the sense and construction of the passage. The word, while a 'hapax,' is an obvious formation, to be compared with O.E. *idel-hende* (*Beow.* 2081), *spær-hende* (only in prose, see Bosworth-Toller, p. 898), O.Icel. *harðhendr* (see Tritzner, Vol. I, p. 733), etc.; it means 'grim-handed,' 'provided with grim paws.' *Slip-hende* is, of course, in our line the strong, not the weak nom. sing. neut., *þæt* being an absolute demonstrative, pointing back to *beran*, not the def. art.; the half-verse *bip þæt slip-hende deor* reminds one of *Beow.* 11^b *þæt wæs god cyning* and other variations of this common summing-up formula. The allusion to 'the bear's fell paw' (cp. 2 *Hen. VI*, v, l. 153) adds to the excellence of the passage and is quite in keeping with the love of direct and concrete epithets, so manifest throughout the Gnomie Verses. Cp. also *Bjar-karímur*, v, 8 (ed. F. Jónsson, Copenhagen, 1904):

*Beljandi hljóp björninn framm
úr bóli krukku,
veifar sínum vönda hramm,
svö virðar hrukku.*

'Shook its baleful paws, so that the men fled.'

(2) *Prayer*, 109 ff.:

*is seo bot æt þe
zelon3 æfter...Ic on leohte ne mæ3
butan earfobum æn3e þin3a,
feasceaft hæle, foldan [w]unian.*

Thorpe (*Cod. Ex.*, p. 459, 1) only indicated a gap in the MS. after *æfter*. Grein (*Bibl.*, Vol. II, p. 285) supplied [*lādē*]. Schipper (*Germ.* XIX,

¹ My collation of the Ex. B. has led to about thirty new readings; these I have discussed in my forthcoming volume *Textual Problems in the Exeter Book*.

334) remarked: 'Nach *æfter* sind zwei Buchstaben überklebt.' Wülker (Grein-W., Vol. II, p. 222), commenting as follows: 'Durch ein loch in der hs. ist das wort nach *æfter* verschwunden, es zeigen sich nur noch einige spuren des letzten buchstabens,' left the gap unfilled. Holthausen (*Indogerm. Forsch.*, IV, p. 385) condemned Grein's [*lāðe*] as 'metrically false' and substituted [*me*], thus arranging a pretty little couplet:

is seo bot æt þe
3elon3 æfter [me].

By peering under a strip of vellum, once applied to cover the hole but loosened by time, I could read quite distinctly the letters *-fe* before *ic*; before *-fe* two letters are lost. It is not difficult to supply what must have been the original MS.-reading:

is seo bot æt þe
3elon3 æfter [li]fe. Ic on leohte ne mæ3, etc.

æfter life, a phrase not found elsewhere in O.E. poetry, but practically synonymous with *æfter deaðe* (*Ri.* 29, 11), *æfter[h]in3on3e* (*Christ.*, 1413), is suggested by another line in our poem, 28 ff.: *hæbbe ic þonne þearfe þæt ic... | ...lif æfter oþrum | 3eseo 7 3esece*, 'a life after the other one' or rather 'another life after this one.' Cf. also the phrase in later English, (*N. E. D.*) *Wyclif Sel. Wks.*, III, 443: 'Aftur a man deserves while he lyves here schal he be rewardid *aftur his lyife*'; and Shakespeare, *Richard III*, I, 4. 43: 'My dream was lengthened *after life*.'

The proposed reading suits the context well: 'I have to look for amends at thy hands when I am dead; in this world I, wretched man, cannot ever dwell without hardships.'

(3) *Riddle 21*, 8^b ff.:

Cynin3 nec 3yrweð
since 7 seolfre 7 mec on sele weorþað,
ne wyrneð word lofes, wisan mæneð
mine for men3o, þær hy meodo drincað.

So Thorpe (*Cod. Ex.*, p. 401, 'denies not words of praise'), Grein (*Bibl.*, Vol. II, p. 378), Assmann (Grein-W., *Bibl.*, Vol. III, p. 196), Tupper (*The Riddles of the Exeter Book*, p. 16, 'word acc. sing.') and Wyatt (*O.E. Riddles*, p. 15, 'word acc. sing.'). They have apparently all overlooked the fact that O.E. *wyrnan* invariably governs the genitive. Cf. also l. 28 in the same riddle: *ac me þæs hyht ple3an || 3eno wyrneð*. The correct reading *word-lofes* (cf. O.Icel. *orð-lóf*, Tritzner,

Vol. II, p. 902) is found only in Bosworth-Toller (pp. 1238 and 1266), while other O.E. dictionaries do not record this 'hapax legomenon.'

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[We grieve to hear that the brilliant young scholar who contributed these notes, a pupil of Professor Lindelöf of Helsingfors, died, after an operation for appendicitis, on October 18th.]

'TRĒSON' IN THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE.

In the *Modern Language Review* for October 1916, page 460, Professor O. F. Emerson called attention to the fact that in 1892 he proposed a new reading for the passage in the *Chronicle* (an. 1135) which Professor Earle and Mr Plummer had printed *þa westre sona þas landes*. According to the new reading, these words, with the following clause (the text of which is undisputed), run as follows: *þa wes treson a þas landes, for æuricman sone ræuede ober þe mihte* ('then was treason in these lands, for every man who could soon robbed another'). This differs from Mr Plummer's text merely in word-division; and Professor Emerson now informs us that the MS. shows no clear word-division at all, so that his reading, which makes good sense, is not really a whit more conjectural than Mr Plummer's, which made nonsense. The correction, if genuine, is of real philological importance, for it gives us an example of the word 'treason' in English nearly a hundred years older than the earliest instance otherwise known.

I think that any scholar who, *without knowing the context*, had presented to him the sentence as quoted above, would consider Professor Emerson's emendation to be practically certain. The objection that such a form as *treson* would not be likely to occur at so early a date could hardly weigh at all against the fact that the correction makes excellent sense of a passage which, as the words had previously been divided, was quite unmeaning. It is therefore no wonder that Mr Plummer, in the second volume (1899) of his edition of the *Chronicle*, hailed the suggestion as a brilliant and valuable discovery.

Nevertheless, it is my decided opinion that if the passage is examined, not in isolation, but with due regard to its context, it will be found that Professor Emerson's strikingly plausible conjecture has after all missed the mark.