

XVI. *Further Extract from the Exeter Manuscript in a second Letter from the Rev. J. J. Conybeare, Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford, to Henry Ellis, Esq. F.R.S. and S.A.*

Read 4th Feb. 1813.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE Anglo-Saxon Poem of which I enclose a Specimen is contained, together with various others, in the Volume preserved in the Library of Exeter Cathedral, an extract from which I had, in November last, the honour of submitting to the Society. Its subject, the Reproach of a Spirit in misery to the body which it formerly inhabited, will doubtless be recognized by those who are conversant with our early Poetry as one upon which the genius of our Minstrels, or rather perhaps of our monastic Versifiers, was not unfrequently exercised. The Exordium of this ancient composition will be found (if I have rightly translated the passage in question, which is somewhat obscure,) to contain a singular instance of popular superstition relative to the time during which the soul was permitted to revisit the Earth after its separation from the body.

I remain,

Dear Sir,

with the greatest esteem,

Yours, &c.

J. J. CONYBEARE.

H. ELLIS, Esq. &c. &c.

The Poem commences thus, on the 98th Folio.

Hupu thæȝ behofað
 Hæletha æghwylc
 Thæt he hȝ saple-rið
 Sȝiȝa-ȝepitiȝe,
 Hu thæt bið deoplic.
 Thonne ȝe Deað cȝmeth,
 Asunðriath tha sibbe
 Tha the ær somuð
 Wæron he and ȝaple.
 Long bið riððan
 Thæt ȝe ȝæȝt nimeð
 Æt Gode ȝylfum
 Spa wite ȝa wuldor,
 Spa him in wopulde ær,
 Ærne thæt eorðfæȝ,
 Ær ȝeƿorhte.
 Sceal ȝe ȝæȝt cuman,
 * Gehthum hƿemȝ,
 Sȝle ȝimb seofon niht,
 Saple riððan
 Thone lichoman,
 The heo ær longe ȝæȝ.
 Thȝeo hund ȝintȝa,
 Butan ær ȝȝȝce
 Ece ðȝȝhten
 Ælmihtȝ Loð

Maxime hoc oportet
 Mortalium unumquemque
 Ut ille ejus animæ iter
 Secum meditetur,
 Quam illud sit longinquum (*altum*).
 Quum mors advenit
 Abrumpit copulam
 Quam olim juncta
 Fuerunt corpus et anima.
 Diu est exinde
 Quod spiritus accipit
 Apud Deum ipsum
 Aut penam aut gloriam
 Sicut ipsi in mundo prius,
 Etiam (in) illo vase terrestri,
 Olim factum est.
 Spiritus veniet
 (In) statione querulus,
 ——— circiter (post) septimanam,
 Anima ad inveniendum
 Corpus.
 Quod illa nuper habitabat,
 300 hyemes,
 Nisi prius constituat,
 Æternus Dominus,
 Omnipotens Deus

* The sense of this clause is by no means clear to me. The word "Lhthum" which occurs once in Cædmon (p. 74. l. 4.) is supposed by Lye to be derived from "Le-hyht," Refugium. Lht or ȝȝte however, appears in the compounds Lebed-Lht, Bed-time—Sangȝht, the Solstice—ȝȝte-ȝal, an Apartment. Its signification in these compounds and in the passage of Cædmon above mentioned seems to be Tempus, Mansio, or Statio. If ȝehthum be taken in the latter of these senses it may be understood as construed in the Latin Version; if in the former, it may signify 'aliquando.' Should the word ȝeht, or ȝȝht be allowed to have signified 'time' (as it must if Lebed-ȝȝht be correctly translated Conticinium, vid. Lye in voce) it will afford us a more plausible Etymology of the Adverb Yet, than the one proposed by Mr. Horne Tooke. The derivative adverbs ȝates (existing in *algates*,) and ȝehthum, will then appear to be formed from the oblique cases by the same analogy as 'whiles' and 'whilom' from 'Hwil' Tempus. The old Teutonic Zit Tempus (vid. Schilter's Glossary in voce) may be derived from the same source. The following word hrenȝ I have ventured to render, querulus, or stridulus, (from Hrem, Vocifera) rather than *compos* as Lye has given it. The only meaning I can discover for ȝȝle is basis, fundamentum, ȝȝll). I suspect it in this place to be a mistake of the transcriber for 'ȝȝlf' or 'ȝȝlfe'.

Ende populde	Finem orbis
Cleopað thonne ƿpa ceapful,	Clamat tunc adeo misera
Calðan neorðe	Frigidâ lingua
Sƿiðceth grimlice	Alloquitur horrens
Gæƿt to ðam ðurte.	Anima pulverem.
“Druðu thu ðreorða,	“Pulvis tu infelix
“To hƿon ðreahteƿt thu me?	“Quo agis me?
“Eorðan fýlner	“Terrenâ putredine
“Eal forpeorðar,	“Omnino marcescis
“Lamer ƿelcner.	“Limî similitudine
“Lýt thu ƿeðhohter to ƿon	“Parum præcepisti expectatione
“Thinne ƿaple ƿið	“Tuum spiritûs-iter
“Siððan ƿurðe,	“Quò futurum esset
“Siððan heo of lichoman	“Quum ille (<i>spiritus</i>) e corpore
“Lædeð ƿære.	“Eductus foret.
“Hƿæt ƿite thu me ƿerða *	“Ut punies me Inique!
“Hƿæt thu hƿu	“Quàm tu verè
“Wýrma ƿiſl	“Vermium esca
“Lýt ƿeðhohter	“Parum cogitasti,
“Hu ðis ƿ long hider.	“Quàm sit longum huc.

Befits it well that man should deeply weigh
His soul's last journey; how he then may fare
When Death comes on him, and breaks short in twain
The bond that held his flesh and spirit link'd;
Long is it thence ere at the hand of Heav'n
The Spirit shall reap or joy or punishment,
E'en as she did in this her earthly frame.
For ere the seventh night of Death hath past,
Ghastly and shrieking shall that Spirit come,
The Soul to find its body,—restless thus,
(Unless high Heav'n first work the end of all things)
An hundred years thrice told the shade shall roam.
With chilling voice that sad and mournful ghost
Upbraids its kindred earth. “Thou hapless dust,
“How fares it with thee now! how dost thou waste

* I am by no means satisfied with the construction of this line, or the clause following it.

"A foul and earthy mass! full little erst
 "Thy thoughts were of that journey which the Soul,
 "Driv'n from her fleshly tenement, is doom'd to!
 "To what sad fate, oh wretched food of worms!
 "Hast thou reduced me,—little thoughtest thou
 "How long and dreary was my destin'd way."

THIS Extract constitutes about one sixth part of the Poem. The remainder is occupied by a tissue of similar reproaches, and appears, upon the whole, to exhibit but little of imagination, and none of those traces of popular opinions or customs which occasionally stamp an additional value on the remains of our ancient Versifiers.

It terminates thus, at the 100th Leaf of the MS.

Thæt mæg æghwylcum
 Men to gemýrdum
 Mod ȝnotteppa.

Id debent (*possunt*) omninð
 Homines in mentem (*revocare*)
 Animi prudentes.