

The Text of "Cleanness"

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THE TEXT OF 'CLEANNESS.'

IN Morris's text of the M.E. poem *Cleanness* there are a considerable number of passages which are very perplexing, owing either to scribal error, or editor's faulty transcription, or else misinterpretation by punctuation or by the Glossarial Index. Several of these difficulties have been disposed of by the *New English Dictionary*, but for many of them the Dictionary gives no help. I therefore submit to the reader's consideration a few emendations and renderings which have occurred to me as possible solutions.

l. 3. I propose to read:

Fayre formeȝ myȝt he fynde in for[b]ering his speche.

The MS. has *forering*. Morris suggests *forbering*, but the sense of the context is against the word. We may translate ll. 1-3: 'Whoever could naturally commend purity, and enumerate the arguments that she deservingly requires, might find fair formulas in advancing (furthering, promoting) his discourse.' Cp. *William of Palerne*, l. 5397:

And touche we ferre as bis tale forberes.

l. 30. Where Morris has *anwhere* and suggests *aywhere*, we might read *awwhere*, M.E. *awhere*, *owhere*, O.E. *āhwær*. Perhaps *u* is intended in the MS.

l. 48. The word *tuch* has probably no connexion with Eng. *tuck*, as Morris suggests. It may be an earlier and more genuine form of the word which in Scotch appears as *toush* and *tosh*: a corruption, according to one view, of O.F. *courte houche*, a dialectal variant of *courte houce*.

l. 54. The sense requires *to-com*; otherwise *to* is redundant. An O.E. *tō-cuman* occurs in Sweet's *A.S. Reader*, LXVII, and the sb. *to-cyme* (= arrival, approach) occurs. Translate ll. 53-54:

Sent his messengers to say that they should assemble, and in becoming apparel make for his feast.

l. 69. It is unlikely that the poet, with so great a choice of alliterating words before him, intended the *sower* (= *swer* according to Morris). We might read:

'& I haf wedded a wyf,' so wer[ned] hym þe bryd,

i.e. 'So the third refused him.' Other possible readings may be preferred by the reader, e.g. *so werp* or *so weres hym* (= so defends, excuses himself).

l. 106. Morris's punctuation has impaired the rhythm and mutilated the sense of this line. In place of a comma after *me* (106) I read:

*For, certeȝ, þyse ilk renkeȝ þat me renayed hadde,
& denounced me noȝt, now at þis tyme...*

Though *naȝt* would be better spelling, I regard *noȝt* as an adv. = wrongly, badly; see *N.E.D.* under *naught*.

l. 148. The reader should correct *erigant* to [*h*]erigaut, O.F. *herigalt* = cloak.

l. 201. The MS. has *vn soundely*, which Morris in later editions regards as *vnsoondely*. Yet with this reading the reader must abuse the line in seeking a satisfactory translation. I suggest:

Ne neuer so sodenly soȝt vn (= on), soundely to weng.

In Northern MSS. *vn* is frequently written for *on*, and there is an instance in *Patience*, l. 240. The verb to *seek on* = pursue, follow up occurs in M.E. and corresponds to O.E. *onsēcean*. Cp. Layamon, l. 8433:

Herigal him soȝte on mid hehaer strengþe.

Translate:

Nor ever so promptly prosecuted in order to avenge soundly.

l. 208. The form *areward*, which Morris conjectures = apostate, and *N.E.D.* = afterwards, may be relegated to Middle-English ghostwords. There is no difficulty when we recollect that in the MS. an unstressed monosyllable is frequently united to a following word. I read:

& he vnkyndly as a karle kydde a reward,

i.e. He proved ungrateful: 'He, ungratefully, showed like a churl a return (for favours).'

l. 214. *dere* should be glossed = fierce and derived from O.E. *dēor*, not *dīere*.

l. 215. The MS. has:

In þe mesure of his mode his metȝ neuer þe lasse.

Morris suggests *metȝ* = *mese*, pity. It is, in my opinion, a scribal error for *meth*. A similar error occurs in l. 1153, where we must read *tyth* for *tyȝt*. *Mesure & mepe* occurs as an alliterative formula at l. 247 and l. 565:

In þe mesure of his mode & mepe of his wyllle.

l. 216. Read *tybe-dool*, cp. *tithedeal*, *tenthdeal* of English dialect = a very small part. See *Sir Gawain*, l. 719 and *Pearl*, l. 136.

l. 222. Alliteration requires an emendation here, e.g.

[S]weued (= *isweyed*) at *þe fyrst swap*...

ll. 224, 5 illustrate a use of the negative in M.E. which is rare and, so far as we know, hitherto unnoted:

Fylter fenden folk forty dayez lencþe
Er þat styngande storme stynt[e] ne myzt.

A similar use of the negative in *Patience* 231 has not been explained:

He wat3 no tytter out-tulde þat tempest ne sesed. (þat þe...)

These are by no means instances of the double negative so common in M.E., but they recall the French redundant *ne* after a comparison of inequality. Cp. *Don Quixote*, Pt. I, Cap. xxviii:

Quán mas agradable compañía harán estos riscos...á mi intencion...que *no* la de ningun hombre humano...?

The *ne* in *Patience* is unglossed in Gollancz's edition. Prof. Emerson recognises a difficulty and suggests that *ne* (= *nee*) is the Northern form of *ny3* = almost. For the above passage in *Cleanness* *stynten* has been proposed; but in view of other passages in the poem the suggestions for both the above are scarcely tenable. There is an instance at l. 983:

Ones ho bluschet to þe burze, but bod ho no lenger
þat ho nas stadde a stiffe ston, a stalworth image.

We have also ll. 1205–6:

Bot er þay at-wappe ne mozt þe wach wyth-oute,
Hi3e skelt wat3 þe askry þe skewes an-vnder.

We may add a passage from Caxton's *Chronicles of England* xxii, 20:

It was not long after that brenne ne come ageyne with a grete nauye.

In these passages the negative occurs in a subordinate clause conveying an unequal comparison of time, and the phrase conjunctions *þat...ne*, *er...ne* have the function of Modern English *than*. The negatives *ne*, *na* occur in M.E., with the force of 'than,' and also in modern dialects; but the forms *þat...ne*, *ere...ne* are best referred to the present northern dialect form *nor(ner)* = *than*. This *nor*, in my opinion, has no connexion with the correlative conj. *nor* (= *ne-other*), but derives from *ne-or* (= *ne-ere*).

l. 230. I do not know what to make of *wrathed*. The *New International Dictionary* records an obsolete adv. *wrath* = sorrowfully, which if genuine would suggest a *wrathe*, v., = repent.

ll. 257, 261 have given difficulty:

*For hit was þe forme-foster þat þe folde bred
þe aþel auncetereȝ suneȝ þat Adam watȝ called
To whom God hade geuen alle þat gayn were
Alle þe blysse boutē blame þat bodi myȝt haue
& þose lykkest to þe lede þat lyued next after.*

Morris suggests *forme-fostereȝ* in apposition with *suneȝ*, and *ledeȝ* for 261. In this case, however, the poet would have written *hit wern* in l. 257, and *forme-foster* recalls *first-father* as a traditional appellation for Adam. We might read [*on*] *þe folde*: 'For it was the first father that begat on the earth the sons of the noble ancestor called Adam, to whom God had given all the pure pleasures (which) that man (*bodi*, l. 260), and those likest unto him who lived after, could have.' For *bodi* = person, cp. *cors* in l. 683.

l. 313. The word *dryuen* represents a rare use of the word *drive*, i.e. to spread out thin, used especially of paint:

& alle þe endentur dryuen daube with-uten.

'(With clay), well spread over, daub the crevices.' In *N.E.D.* under *drive* 12, we find cited from Palsg. 529/2: 'Drive this playster abroad.'

l. 341. As *g* is the alliterating letter here and in l. 611 etc., we should read *god-man* or *God-man*, i.e. the mediaeval designation of civility.

l. 353. *siȝed* would be a better spelling than *seyed*.

l. 379. Read *bonk[es]*.

l. 411. The word *aȝt-sum* (? *aȝt sum*) is glossed by Morris, variously, as = 'joyous' and (later) = 'anxious.' The word is merely 'eightsome,' O.E. *eahta sum* = one of eight, with seven others; cp. Scotch *twosome*, *foursome*, etc.

A passage which has been variously interpreted begins at l. 431:

*Al watȝ wasted þat þer wonyed þe worlde withinne
þer euer floȝe oþer fīwe oþer on foteȝ zede
þat roȝly watȝ þe remnaunt þat þe rac dryueȝ
þat alle gendreȝ so joȝst wern joȝmed wyth-inne.*

The stumbling-block has consisted of the words *roȝly* of l. 433 and *þat* of l. 434. Morris writes on *roȝly*, 'Is it an error for *rwly*, sorrowful?' Skeat suggests *roȝly* = pleasant, glad, and we may then translate, '...so that the remainder whom the rack drives about were glad that all kinds, thus lodged, were assembled within.' The *N.E.D.* gives *roȝly* = roughly, approximately. The context however leads us to regard *roȝly* as adj. = rough, i.e. in dire straits, harassed; and *remnaunt* as referring not to the survivors from the flood but to the ark. Translate: 'So that the

relic (from the flood) that the rack drives about, within which all kinds thus lodged were assembled together, was in dire straits.'

l. 449. *Wern* is perhaps the poet's own error, due to attraction with *cragez*. A similar error occurs in *Patience*, l. 343.

l. 456. The spelling *corbyal* for *corbel* is perhaps due to a Northern scribe influenced by *corbie*.

l. 550. Morris writes, 'The sense seems to require *ne* before *sytte3*.' With a different punctuation the *ne* is unnecessary:

*For is no segge vnder sunne so seme of his craftes.
If he be sulped in synne þat sytte3 vncleue,
On spec of a spote may spede to mysse
Of þe syzte of þe souerayn þat sytte3 so hyze.*

This punctuation gives a sense more in keeping with the poet's argument. In the preceding quatrain the reader is warned that he may so beslobber himself with filth as to debar him from the Vision of God:

For there is no man under the sun so scrupulous (as God) in his works.
If he, that endures (to be) unclean, be soiled by some sin,
A single speck of a spot may speed to deprive (him) of the Beatific Vision.

l. 553.

For þat schewe me wehale in þo schyre howse3.

The interpretation depends on the way in which we regard *þat*. It may refer to the 'speck of a spot' which may ruin us in the sight of God (l. 551), and *schewe* is perhaps best interpreted by reference to the phrase 'the spot shows.' We might translate 'For that (spot) shall expose me in those bright mansions.' The *schyre howse3* is obviously a reference, not so much to the *multæ mansiones* of St John ix, 2, as to the *multae et pulchrae mansiones* which, in the formulated doctrine of the Beatific Vision, were symbolic of varying rewards.

l. 599. I think there is little difference in meaning between *drawe* and *dryze*:

He may not dryze to drawe a-lyt (MS. *allyt*).

Translate: 'He may not suffer (Himself) to endure (deeds of shame, l. 597) at all' (a little). The word *draw*, by frequent association with *dree*, acquired the same meaning. Cp. *Legend of Katharine*, l. 1914: '*þat eni flesch mahe drehen & drahen*.'

l. 629. The word *cob-hous* has not been glossed:

He cached to his cob-hous & a calf brynge3.

Morris conjectures *cov-hous* = cow-house. The word *cob* is probably the same as Eng. dialect *cub* = pent-house for cattle, cattle-shed. Cp. Du. *kub* = a wicker basket, E. Fries. *kübbing* = shed, German *koben* = pigsty,

originally = hut. The earliest instance of this *cub* recorded by the *N.E.D.* is one of 1546.

l. 630. As in most printed texts since 1900, *tyrne* must become *tyrue*; the same word as *terue*.

l. 765. Morris has:

'I graunt,' quod þe grete God, 'graunt mercy þat oþer,'

and in a note suggests = '*graunt mercy [to] þat oþer (?)*.' A far simpler rendering would be:

'I graunt,' quod þe grete God; 'Graunt-mercy!' þat oþer,

i.e. 'Gramercy!' Cp. Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, III, 317:

She saith 'Grant-mercy, leue sir!'

l. 795.

Watȝ non autly in ouþer, for aungels hit wern.

In a note Morris proposes that we read *þen* for *in*: 'There was none more noble than the other.' In the corrigenda he suggests *antly*[*t*], = (human) form, O.E. *andwlita*. The *N.E.D.* refers the word to *aughtly*, so that *autly* = *aztly* 'estimable.' The glossing 'estimable' however calls for comment. *Autly*, like English dialect *aughtlike*, may = 'like anything (known), like aught (with which they could be compared)'; in this sense, 'estimable.' So we may translate, 'There was none in either of them describable (capable of estimation).'

l. 820. The word *sour*, which Morris unnecessarily conjectures = savour, may be glossed = leaven. Cp. Scotch *sour-cake*, Eng. dial. *sour-bread*, also *sour-leaven*, *sour-dough*. Lot admonishes his servants to prepare food without leaven, 'wyth no sour ne no salt.'

l. 846. If *sorȝe* be retained, we might read *ȝescande* (O.E. *giscian*) for *ȝestande*. In view however of *froþande fylþe* in l. 1721 I am inclined to read *ȝestande* *sore* or *sour*. Cp. Eng. dial. *saur* = dung, filth, M.E. *sour*.

l. 848. The word *brych* has given difficulty. Morris conjectures = filth (cf. Germ. [*er*]brechen = vomit). The *N.E.D.* suggests = transgression (O.E. *bryce* = a breaking [e.g. of commandments]). The word however might be referred to an obsolete French *briche* = a shameful situation, recorded by Hatzfeld and Darmesteter.

l. 935. By a hyphen Morris has mutilated the meaning:

& þay token hit as tyt, & tented hit lyttel.

The adv. *as-tyt* = quickly, is not intended here. *tyt* is a noun = a trifle, banter, a tale. Cp. Eng. dial. *tīt* = a tale, a morsel, etc., also 'to tell tits,' 'tit-bits,' 'tittle-tattle,' Icel. *tittir* = a small bird. The line may be

rendered, 'And they received (the news) as a trifle (or banter) and heeded it little.' In support of this reading I may cite l. 2816 of *Cursor Mundi* which describes the same incident:

þam þoʒt it was bot in play.

l. 956. For *swe* we may read *swe[d]*, but a form like *swe[led]* would be more graphic as regards the sense.

l. 958. The form *Abdama* may be an error for Mandeville's *Aldama*, Vulgate *Adama* (Admah).

l. 1038. For Morris's *spinnande* read *spumande* = spumous, O.F. **spumer*, Lat. *spumare*; see *N.E.D.* under *spume*, v.

l. 1048. We must restore *wyndowande*.

l. 1075. Morris has vitiated an instance of the poet's effective antithesis. The MS. reads:

*Watʒ neuer so blysfyl a bour as watʒ abos þenne
Ne no schroude hous so schene as a schepon þare.*

(Morris's 1st ed. has *a-schepon*.)

Morris regards *abos* as an error for *abof*. I am quite sure that here we have another instance of the indefinite article joined to a following word. Read:

Watʒ neuer so blysfyl a bour as watʒ a bos þenne.

·bos is the English dialect *boose* = crib, upper part of a cow-stall. The form presumes an O.E. **bōs*, cp. *bōsig* = cow-stall. With this reading we have a contrast between a bower and the crib in which Christ was laid, and in l. 1076 between a furnished house and the shippon. Certainly the first instance of this word recorded in *N.E.D.* is in *Prompt. Parv.*, A.D. 1440. Similar cases, however, of words in these poems which are not met with again until the following century occur at ll. 629, 883, 1514 (*cob-hous*, *horyed*, *rok*); and we need have no diffidence in accepting the form *bos*.

l. 1124.

ʒet þe perle payres not whyle ho in pyese lasttes.

Pliny, *N.H.* Book IX, writing on the pearl, states that no fall can break the gem. It is unlikely therefore that *in pyese* means 'entire.' If the phrase is genuine, it may be interpreted in the sense that however long the pearl is worn (l. 1123), it does not deteriorate so long as it remains in [existence as a 'precious] piece' (see *Pearl*, l. 192). One is however tempted to read *in pyere*, i.e. [in use] among precious stones.

l. 1153. *tyʒt* (Morris O.E. *tihtan*) is corrected by *N.E.D.* to *tith* (= grant, O.E. *tiþian*).

l. 1234. *tuyred* is regarded by some as an error for *truyed* (aphetised form of *destruire*). The *N.E.D.* refers the word to the *tyrue*d of l. 630 above. It may however be the obsolete Scotch *toir* = beat down (recorded in *New Intern. Dict.*).

l. 1261. Metre requires *stynt*[e].

ll. 1357-8. The MS. reads:

*Thenne þis bolde Baltaȝar biþenkkes hym ones
To vouche on a vayment of his vayne g[l]orie.*

No *vayment* seems to be recorded. In O.F. *vouchier* occurs in the sense = call, and *vouche on* may = call for (a display), but this signification cannot be paralleled from M.E. Perhaps we should read:

To vouche [a]n avayment of his vayne-g[l]orie,

'To attest a display of his vain-glory.'

l. 1381. Read *wonder-wroȝt*, cp. O.E. *wundor-weorc*.

l. 1385. *pursaynt* would be a better spelling than *pursaunt*:

þe place þat plyed þe pursaunt wythinne...

Translate, 'The place which the precinct (i.e. bounding line) enclosed.' For *ply* in this sense, see M.E. *imply*, *emply* = enfold.

l. 1393. A difficult passage:

When þe terme of þe tyde watȝ to vsched of þe feste...

The reader naturally assumes with Morris that *to vsched* is an error for *tousched*, i.e. touched, come to, approached. This gives a satisfactory translation, but the spelling *tousched* is quite exceptional. In lieu of any satisfactory explanation I make, with some diffidence, a tentative suggestion. We might read *vsched* = *to isched* (or ? *to-isch d*). The scribe writes *v* for *i* at l. 524, *umbre*. The M.E. *ish*, *v*. is the O.F. *issir*, *eissir* = go forth, come to an issue. A noun *ish* was formerly used in Scots law = 'termination, expiry (e.g. of a lease)'. Cp. the phrase 'at the ish of which term' (i.e. of time). So l. 1393 might be modernised:

When the term of the time of the feast was come to an ish.

l. 1410. *felor* or *felour* (= foliage) would be better spelling than *foler*.

l. 1414. Morris and also *N.E.D.* have accepted as genuine the MS. form *tulket*, and both refer it to O.N. *túlka* = to speak (? hence) ? to sound. As no parallel use of the word in M.E. is given, a suggestion of Prof. Skeat's in his Glossary to *Wars of Alexander*, E.E.T.S. XLVII, seems to proffer a more acceptable account of the word: 'In MSS. we often find *kk* written more like *lk*, the double letter being denoted only

by doubling the down stroke. Hence we may correct *tulket* to *tukket* in the Glossary to *Allit. Poems*, which is incorrect.' Thus *tukket* = tucked, i.e. sounded the tuck of drum.

l. 1463. The word *apert* I prefer to gloss = skilfully (O.F. *aperti*, pp.), rather than = open view.

l. 1469. MS. *sardiners*, generally regarded as genuine, is perhaps an error for *sardinez* (= ?sardines or sardinex).

l. 1470. *alabaunderryne*s is unique, and is due to a form like Mandeville's *alabrandines* (c. XXIII, Account of the Palace of the Great Cham of Cathay). It is doubtful whether we should regard *amaraunz* as genuine, though *N.E.D.* accepts it. The other occurrence in M.E., *emerant*, may be a scribe's or editor's error. *amaffised* seems due to a scribe copying through dictation.

l. 1472 contains forms we should treat with suspicion :

Penitotes & pyrkardines, ay perles bitwene.

The *N.E.D.* accepts *penitot* from this single passage. *peritot* is the older form of *peridot*. A form *pelidot* occurs occasionally in *O.F.*, but there is no trace of a *penitot*, which here I regard as an error for *per-*. In this case *per-* seems to give the alliterating letters, and suggests a form like *pyrkardines* (?? *pyr-kardines*) :

Peritotes & pyrkardines, ay perles bitwene.

l. 1483. Considerations of metre and alliteration suggest that a word has been omitted, e.g. :

Of mony kyndes [colored], of fele-kyn hues.

Also in l. 1516 :

& þenne arn dressed [dere], dukez & prynces.

l. 1514. The word *rok* is, I am sure, the same word as English and Scotch dialects *ruck* = crowd (? cp. Swed. *ruka* = a little heap) :

Quen renkkes in þat ryche rok' rennen hit to cache.

The only objection to this suggestion is that the word, in the sense = a crowd, is not recorded until the sixteenth century. It is for a similar reason that scholars have hesitated in regarding *horyed* of l. 883 as = hurried. See note on the word *bos* above, l. 1075.

l. 1520. I propose to read :

As vchon hade hym in-helde, he haled of þe cuppe.

Morris and *N.E.D.* read *in helde*. The *N.E.D.* treats *helde* as a sb. = inclination, i.e. 'As each one had the inclination.' In English dialect however *hield*, sb. = a pouring out, and the vb. *hield*, *heald* = to pour out

(liquor). The verb *inhelde*, *inhield*, occurs once in Chaucer (see *N.E.D.* ; MSS. have *in hield*, etc.):

Ye in my nakede herte sentement inhelde.

I translate: 'As each one had (liquor) poured out for him, he tossed off the cup.'

- l. 1525. *gauleȝ* must = 'wretches':

Alle þe goude golden goddes þe gauleȝ ȝet neuenen.

Compare (cited in *N.E.D.* under *tone*):

The cryis & evill-tonyt sanges of þe gaulles.

(Livy, *S.T.S.*, II, 208.)

l. 1527. *heryed* would be a better spelling than *heyred*, though *y* may denote vowel-length.

- l. 1543. For *ryth* the *N.E.D.* reads *ryther*.

- l. 1566. Read *make[s]*.

- l. 1584. *hyzed* would be a better spelling than *hez*.

l. 1634. For *tede* the *N.E.D.* suggests = 'tied, joined': ? read *t[yȝ]ede*, or *tede* as a Northern form. But why not refer the word to O.E. *tēon* = display?

- l. 1686. *ouer-syzed* would be a better spelling than *ouer-seyed*.

- l. 1697. I suggest:

þat were croked and kene as þe kyte paume.

[MS. has *panne* or *paune*, or ? *pauue*.]

The word *paume* is used for 'a claw' in Lydgate, *De Guil. Pilgrimage*, l. 17480:

...handys of merveyllous fasoun, lyk the pawmys off a gryffoun.

- l. 1735. Read *fayth-dedes*, cp. *fayth-words*, *Destr. Troy*, l. 240.

- l. 1747. The MS. has:

þe comynes alof called...

and Morris queries ? *aloft*. We must read *a lof called*, i.e. 'shouted acclamation.'

- l. 1776. We might read:

Ascaped ouer þe skyre watteres & sca[l]ed þe walles.

(MS. and Morris have *scaped*.) The phrase *skayles þe wallis* occurs in *Morte Arthur*, l. 3034, this being the first recorded instance of the word in such a context (c. 1400). In a figurative sense = 'mount' (into heaven), the word is found c.1380 in Wycliffe, *Select Works*, II, 6.

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CORK.