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PIERS THE PLOWMAN AND ITS SEQUENCE

CONTRIBUTED TO  
*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE*

BY

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## FOREWORDS

to the Offprint of PROF. MANLY'S Chapter on "*Piers the Plowman* and its Sequence" in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. ii, pp. 1-42, A.D. 1908.

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Prof. Manly's discovery of the multiple authorship of *Piers Plowman* is, to me, the best thing done in my time at Early English. Henry Bradshaw's lift up to the Man of Law of the Tales forming the rest of Group B of the Canterbury Tales, Nicholson's proof of the humbug of the genuineness and reputed authorship of Mandeville's Travels, Henry Bradley's setting right the run of the *Testament of Love*, and his demonstration that Thomas Usk was the author of it, are the most memorable events in our section of study since I began work in 1861. But I set Manly's achievement above them, because of the greater importance of the Plowman's Vision for the student of Literature and Social England, and because the Chicago Professor for the first time clears away from the poet of the A version the tangential strays and confusions of the author of the B revision, and the rewritings, changes, differences of opinion, and spurious biographical details introduced by the writer of the C version, and leaves us a poet more worthy of being Chaucer's contemporary and ally than we had thought possible.

That some folk hesitate to accept all Manly's conclusions is not matter for wonder, because they haven't yet graspt the most incontestable point brought forward by him in *Modern Philology*, Jan. 1906, and confirmd and commented on by our chief English seer in these matters, Henry Bradley, in the *Athenæum* of 21 April, 1906.<sup>1</sup>

Manly showd that not only was there a gap in the A text, which included the whole of the confession of Wrath (and perhaps the conclusion of the confession of Envy), but also that in some way some lines had been joined to the confession of Sloth which were strangely out of character.<sup>2</sup> He proposed to account for both difficulties by supposing that the two halves of a double leaf had in some way been lost from the original MS., one half containing the confession of Wrath (and, perhaps, the end of Envy), and the other containing a passage of about 62 lines separating what is left of the confession of Sloth from the passage concerning the restitution of ill-gotten gains which is now confused with it. Henry Bradley, while agreeing as to the loss and confusion, offerd another explanation of the matter, which he, and I also, regard as more satisfactory. This was, that when dealing with two of the Seven Deadly Sins, Avarice and

<sup>1</sup> See these articles below, pp. vii-xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Bradley holds, and I agree with him, that these Sloth lines apply and belong to Avarice.

Sloth, the scribe of A copied a page of his original in its wrong order, and left out of Avarice 24 lines which were part of it, and made them part of Sloth; and that when the author of B revised this wrong version of Sloth, he failed to see the scribe's mistake, and not only treated the erroneously placed lines in their wrong position, as in their right one, but put-in some fresh lines to justify their wrongness.<sup>1</sup> (The C-man set this mistake right.)

Not content with this first blunder, the copier of A made a second, as stated by Manly on p. 33 of the *Cambr. Hist.*, vol. ii. When Piers made his Will, and after leaving his soul to God, and his body to the Church, the author of A wrote

“ Mi wyf schal haue that I won · with treuthe, and no more,      89  
And dele among my frendes · and my deore children,”      90

and added—no doubt at the top or bottom of the page, with a tick to show where the lines ought to come in,—

“ ‘ Dame Werche-whon tyme is ’ · hette Pers wyf;      (71) 91  
His douhter hette ‘ Do-riht-so- · or-thi-dame-wol-the-bete ’ :      92  
His sone hette ‘ Soffre-thi-sovereyns- · for-to-han-heor-wille-      93  
‘ And-deeme-hem-not; for-yif thou-do, · thou-schalt-hit-deore-  
abugge.’ ”      94

But A's scribe, careless or idiotic, instead of putting these four lines where A meant em to go, after the Will's mention of Piers's wife and children, copied and shovd them into a place 16 lines earlier, where they've nothing to do with what came before or after them. And both the B and C men, when revising and enlarging A's miscopied text, were unable to see that the above four lines were misplaced, and left them standing in the scribe's blunderd position.

Now this was absolutely impossible if the author of A had been the B or C reviser of his own work. Had he been so, he would of course have said what any of us would say in a like case now: “ Why, the careless dog has copied my 24 Avarice lines, completing my treatment of the Sin, as part of my Sloth, with which they've nothing whatever to do, and has lifted my 4 lines, added to my Will, into a place where only a fool could put em; and of course I'll shift both sets of lines in my revisions, back to their right place.” But this is just what the B-writer didn't do, tho C did correct the Avarice blunder, in clumsy fashion.

It is thus incontestably certain that the B and C revisers and enlargers of the A version of the poem, were not the men who wrote that version, but

<sup>1</sup> The difference between Bradley and Manly is only as to how the blunder of A's scribe—discovered by Manly—arose, and whether the misplaced lines were meant by A for Avarice, or not.

wholly different persons. It was not possible for the A-man, when making elaborate revisions of his poem, and greatly enlarging it, to be so stupid or so careless as not only to pass over such blunders as his first scribe had made, but to attempt to justify the first of them, and thus trebly make a fool of himself.

If, then, the student will start with this sure fact in his mind, that the B and C men couldn't possibly have been the A one, he will find no difficulty in giving their due value to Prof. Manly's arguments, and accepting them. But he will join me in earnestly urging Prof. Manly to write his full book on *Piers Plowman*, and show what we can believe as to its several authors' lives.

I give hearty thanks to my friend Prof. Manly, to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, and to my friends Dr. A. W. Ward and Mr. A. R. Waller, the Editors of *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, for their leave to have 500 copies of this Offprint from vol. ii of the *History*, for the Members of the Early English Text Society.

No copies will be on sale to the public. The *History* is such an improvement on its predecessors, and is published at such a moderate price, that every student who can possibly afford it, ought to buy it.

F. J. FURNIVALL.

*Southwold, Aug. 27, 1908. Revised in Nov.*

To save our Members the trouble of referring to the volumes of *Piers Plowman*, I reprint, from Skeat's text, the Avarice and Sloth lines referred to above.

This is how the author of A originally wrote the end of his *Avarice* :

Bot I swere nou sothely · that sunne wol I lete, [Skeat, p. 149.] 142

And neuer wikkedliche weye · ne fals chaffare vsen

Bote weende to Walsyngham · and my wyf also,

And bidde the rode of Bromholm · bringe me out of dette. 145

\* And 3it I-chulle zelden a3eyn · 3if I so much haue, (236) 146

Al that I wikkedliche won · seththe I wit hade. [\* Here begins the shifted passage.]

“ And thauh my lyfode lakke · letten I nulle

That vche mon schal hebben his · er ich henne wende ;

<sup>1</sup> And with the residue and the remenaunt · (bi the rode of

Chester!),

(240) 150

I schal seche seynt Treuthe · er I seo Rome ! ”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1-1</sup> The lines are perhaps spurious. See vii. 93-4, at the end of *Piers's Will* :—

And with the Residue and the Remenaunt · by the Rode of Chestre,  
I wol worschupe therwith · Treuthe in my lyue.—Hy. Bradley.

Robert the robbour · on *Reddite*<sup>1</sup> he lokede,  
 And, for ther nas not wher-with · he wepte ful sore.  
 But ȝit the sunfol schrewe · seide to him-seluen : 154  
 “Crist, that vppon Caluarie · on the cros diȝedest,  
 Tho Dismas my brother · bi-souȝte the of grace,  
 And heddest merci of that mon · for *memento* sake,  
 Thi wille worth vppon me · as ich haue wel deseruet (248) 158  
 To haue helle for euere · ȝif that hope neore.  
 So rewe on me, Robert · that no red haue,  
 Ne neuere weene to wynne · for craft that I knowe.  
 Bote for thi muchel merci · mitigacion I be-seche ; (252) 162  
 Dampne me not on domes day · for I dude so ill.”  
 Ak what fel of this feloun · I con not feire schewe,  
 But wel ich wot he wepte faste · watur with his eizen,  
 And knouhlechede his gult · to Crist ȝit eft-sones, (256) 166  
 That *Penitencia* is pike · he schulde polissche newe,  
 And lepe with him ouerlond · al his lyf-tyme,  
 For he hath leizen by *Latro* · Lucifers brother. 169

But the lines 146–169, which complete *Avarice*, were on a separate leaf, and were mistakingly copied by the scribe of A as part of *Sloth*, who had nothing to do with him.

When the B-man took to revising and enlarging A, he faild to see the mistake which the A scribe had made, though he did feel that some lines were needed to justify the sudden plumping of *Avarice*'s bit about ‘Robert the robber’ into the incongruous *Sloth*. So he put into his jointly-blunderd *Sloth-Avarice* the following lines, and evidently thought he had made the thing all right :—

ȝif I bigge and borwe it · but ȝif it be ytailled, 429 B,  
 I forgete it as ȝerne · and ȝif men me it axe *Skeat, p. 168.*  
 Sixe sithes or seuene · I forsake it with othes ;  
 And thus tene I trewe men · ten hundreth tymes. 432  
 And my seruauȝt some tyme · her salarye is bihynde ;  
 Reuthe is to here the rekenynge · whan we shal rede acomptes ;  
 So with wikked wille and wraththe · my werkmen I paye. 435

When the C-man took to revising A and B, he saw the mistakes of the A-scribe and the B-man, and he restord the misplaced *Avarice* lines of A to their right sequence. But he evidently didn't realize that A's *Reddite*,

<sup>1</sup> The text, ‘*Reddite ergo omnibus debita*,’ Rom. xiii. 7.—Skeat. Render to all their dues.—*Auth. Vers.*

on which Robert the Robber lookt, and which B kept, was the text *Reddite ergo omnibus debita*, Romans xiii. 7; and he said to himself, "Why, if Robert lookt on *Reddite*, *Reddite* must be a man. So I'll make him a Welshman, and instead of B's Sloth words in l. 463, "And zete wil I," I'll insert a line and a third, and then wind up with two fresh lines after his l. 466—which are put in square brackets below<sup>1</sup>—

[Then was ther a Walishman · was wonderliche sory ;	C 307
He highte '3yuan] 3eld-azeyn · if-ich-so-moche haue,	B 463
‘ Al pat ich wickedlich wan · sytthen ich wit hadde :	
‘ And thauh my liflode lacke · leten ich nelle,	C 312
‘ That ech man schal haue hus · er ich hennes wende.	B 466
[‘ For me ys leuere in this lif · as a lorel beggen,	C 314
‘ Than in lysse to lyue · and lese lyf and soule.’ ]	

And no doubt the C-man thought he too 'had made the thing all right.' In fact, so ingenious is C's work that my clever friend Dr. Jusserand is certain that no one but the A-man could have done it. I needn't say that Prof. Manly, Dr. Hy. Bradley and I don't agree with him, specially as C left the 4 Will-added lines in their wrong place.

One more point I should mention. Besides the misplaced leaf of A's *Avarice*, one or more other leaves, containing the end of *Envy* and whole of *Wrath*, was or were lost, so that they are wanting in all the extant MSS. of A. One or more leaves, containing the end of *Sloth*, may also have been lost.

In his revision of the work, the B-man completed *Avarice* and *Sloth*, and wrote a fresh *Wrath*. But instead of the powerful lines in which we who believe in A are convinst that he would have embodied his view of the fierce *Wrath*, the B-man makes him a friar, the convent's gardener, who promotes lying, gets folk to confess to friars instead of parsons, and makes friars and parsons despise one another. *Wrath* is an Abbess's nephew, and spreads scandalous lies about the nuns and monks, till they call each other liars, and fight. Among the monks he tells tales, and is flogd, and fed on spare diet; but he tells every one all the evil that he knows of every monk in the cloister. As a sketch of *Wrath*'s doings, B's production is as feeble as it well can be; and it cannot, with any probability or fairness, be set down to A. The C-man strengthens it with a short fight between two women who call one another Whore; but even then, it is a poor thing, quite unworthy of A.

British Museum, Oct. 1, 1908. Revised in Nov.

<sup>1</sup> Manly and Bradley think the suggestion to make a Welshman came from B's line 463 (zeld-azeyn), rather than from any misunderstanding of *Reddite*.

## THE LOST LEAF OF 'PIERS THE PLOWMAN,' BY PROF. MANLY.

SUMMER before last, in the enforced leisure of a long convalescence, I reread *Piers the Plowman*, or perhaps I had better say, read it for the first time; for, although I had more than once read the first seven passus of the B-Text and various other parts of the poem, I had never before read the whole of all three texts in such a way as to get any real sense of the relations of the versions to one another. Fortunately, I did not at that time possess a copy of Professor Skeat's two-volume edition, and consequently was obliged to use the edition which he published for the Early English Text Society. Thus I read each version separately and obtained a definite sense of its style and characteristics. Before the reading was completed, I found myself obliged to question very seriously the current view in regard to the relations of the three versions. The problems became so interesting that I devoted myself to a serious and careful study of them, with the aid of all the available apparatus, and have made them the subject of two courses with my students, who have given me useful suggestions and much help.

Every sort of investigation to which the versions have been subjected has resulted in confirming my original suspicions, and, indeed, in changing them from suspicions into certainties. I am now prepared, I think, to prove that the three versions are not the work of one and the same man, but each is the work of a separate and distinct author; that of the A-Text only the first eight passus are the work of the first author, the principal part of the vision of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobeest having been added by another author; and that not only lines 101-112 of Passus XII in MS. Rawl. Poet. 137 are the work of Johan But, but that he is responsible for a considerable portion of that passus, probably for at least one-half of it. These conclusions, if accepted, of course entirely destroy the personality built up for the author, mainly from details given only in the C-Text, on the theory that all parts of all three versions are by the same hand; and, indeed, make it doubtful, as I shall try to show, whether the autobiographical details were intended, even by the author of C, to be taken as genuine traits of the author himself instead of attributes of the dreamer—that is to say, whether the dreamer is not as much a fictional character as any of the other figures which participate in the dream. I shall try to support these conclusions by differences in language, differences in versification, differences in the use and in the kind of figurative language, and above all by such striking differences in the mental powers and qualities of the authors as make it highly improbable that they can be one and the same person; and I shall point out such misunderstandings on the part of each of the later authors of passages expanded

by him as seem to me to change the probabilities derived from the other kinds of evidence into certainties. It will appear further, I think, that the merits of the A-Text have been seriously underestimated, and that it is in reality not merely artistically the best of the three, but is in unity of structure, vividness of conception, and skill of versification, on a level with the best work of the fourteenth century, including Chaucer's.

The materials supporting these conclusions are now well in hand, but I shall not be able to put them into form for publication until the advent of my vacation, which will occur in the coming spring. I feel confident that I can then fill out this outline and justify the promises herein made. I make this announcement now in order that other scholars may investigate the problems and be ready to pass a critical judgment upon my results when they appear. I am aware that this will prevent the book from creating any sensation when it appears, but it is of less consequence that the book should make a sensation than that the problems should be subjected to a long and critical investigation by more than one person. Meanwhile, I offer for consideration the investigation of a small problem which easily detaches itself from the general argument, although, as will be seen, it contributes something to it.

In the A-Text, the whole of Passus V is devoted to the effects of the preaching of Conscience upon the "field full of folk." Repentance comes to them, and they confess their sins and promise amendment. The chief penitents are the personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins. The last of these personifications is Sloth. The passage concerning him begins with l. 222, and it is this passage, with the lines immediately following, to which I invite your attention.

¶ Sleupe for serwe · fel doun I-swowene  
Til *vigilate* þe veil · fette water at his eizen,  
And flatte on his face · and faste on him criȝede, 224  
And seide, "war þe for wonhope · þat Wol þe bi-traye.  
¶ 'Icham sori for my sunnes' · sei to pi-seluen,  
And bet pi-self on þe Breste · and bidde god of grace,  
For nis no gult her so gret · his Merci nis wel more."  
¶ Þenne sat sleupe vp · and sikide sore, 229  
And made a-vou bi-fore god · for his foule sleupe;  
"Schal no sonenday pis seuen ȝer · (bote seknesse hit make),  
þat I ne schal do me ar day · to þe deore churche, 232  
And here Matins and Masse · as I a Monk were.  
¶ Schal non ale after mete · holde me þennes,  
Til ichauc Euensong herd · I beo-hote to þe Rode.

And 3it I-chulle zelden a3eyn · 3if I so muche haue,  
 Al þat I wikkedliche won · seþþe I wit hade. 237

¶ And pauh my lyfode lakke · letten I nulle  
 þat vche mon schal hebben his · er ich henne wende :  
 And with þe Residue and þe remenaunt · bi þe Rode of Chester !  
 I schal seche seynt Treuþe · er I seo Rome !”

¶ Robert þe Robbour · on *Reddite* he lokede,  
 And for þer nas not Wher-with · he wepte ful sore.  
 And 3it þe sunfol schrewe · seide to him-seluen : 244  
 “ Crist, þat vppon Caluarie · on þe Cros di3edest,  
 þo Dismas my broþer · bi-sou3te þe of grace,  
 And heddest Merci of þat mon · for *Memento* sake,  
 þi wille worþ vppon me · as Ich haue wel deseruet  
 To haue helle for euere · 3if þat hope neore. 249  
 So rewe on me, Robert · þat no Red haue,  
 Ne neuere ween to wynne · for Craft þat I knowe.  
 Bote for þi muchel Merci · mitigacion I be-seche ;  
 Dampne me not on domes day · for I dude so ille.”

¶ Ak what fel of þis Feloun · I con not feire schewe,  
 But wel Ich wot he wepte faste · watur with his e3zen,  
 And knouhlechede his gult · to Crist 3it eft-sones, 256  
 þat *Penitencia* his pike he schulde polissche newe,  
 And lepe with him ouerlond · al his lyf tyme,  
 For he haþ le3zen bi *latro* · lucifers brother.

It will be observed at once, that while ll. 222–35 are thoroughly appropriate to Sloth, ll. 236–41 are entirely out of harmony with his character, and could never have been assigned to him by so careful an artist as A, who in no single instance assigns to any character either words or actions not clearly and strictly appropriate. Careful consideration of the passage and comparison of it and ll. 242–59 with ll. 222–35, will convince everyone, I believe, that ll. 236–41 really belong to Robert the Robber, and are a part either of his confession, or of a confession suggested to him by someone else (cf. ll. 226–28). Robert the Robber, it will be seen, decides to make restitution of his ill-gotten wealth, or is urged to make such a decision, but, on looking for the goods with which to make repayment, is unable to find any, and is obliged to cast himself wholly and entirely upon the mercy of God. Is it not clear, then, that there is really a lacuna between l. 235 and l. 236; and evidently not a gap of one or two lines, such as might occur in consequence of the eye of the scribe catching up the wrong word and skipping a few lines? The query naturally suggested is: “May not a whole leaf of



the MS. have been lost?" This would make a gap of many lines, sufficient for the development of the confession of Robert the Robber upon some such scale as those of Envy, ll. 59-106, Covetousness, ll. 107-45, Gluttony, ll. 146-221; for a transition, if any be necessary, from these personified abstractions to the concrete figure of the Robber; and also for a less abrupt ending of the confession of Sloth. Many of the MSS. measure  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 6$  inches, or thereabouts (see Skeat's descriptions in the prefaces to the E. E. T. S. ed.); MS. L has *c.* 40 lines to a page, R has *c.* 31, W measures  $11\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  inches, but is "in a large hand," Y has *c.* 37, O has *c.* 40, C<sub>2</sub> has *c.* 37, I has *c.* 31, F has *c.* 37, S ranges from 33 to 44, K has *c.* 34, Douce 104 has 34 or 35, Hl. 2376 has *c.* 37, Roy. B. xvii has *c.* 38; of the MSS. of the A-Text, U has *c.* 33 (or, according to another statement, *c.* 28), D. has *c.* 31, Trin. Dub. 4. 12 has *c.* 30. Of course there were also MSS. much larger than these,<sup>1</sup> but it seems not improbable that the page of the original may have contained between 30 and 40, and consequently that the lost leaf may have contained between 60 and 80 lines.

But if the leaf was lost, it must have been missing in the original of all the extant MSS. of the A-Text, for all of them contain the passage under discussion in precisely the same form, except for insignificant variations in spelling, etc. It is easy enough to understand how the copyists were undisturbed by the sense (or nonsense) of the passage, but it is not easy to see how the torn remnant of this half-sheet could have entirely escaped attention, if there were any such remnant; and if there was none, the other half of the sheet also would pretty certainly have disappeared very soon. This is precisely what I think occurred.

It has long been pointed out as a curious feature of the vision of the Seven Deadly Sins in this passus that the sin of Wrath is entirely overlooked and omitted. It is incredible that any mediæval author writing specifically on such a topic and dealing with it at such length<sup>2</sup> could have forgotten or overlooked any of these well known categories; and it is especially

<sup>1</sup> MS. V has a very large page, containing two columns of 80 lines each; the Lincoln's Inn MS., written about 1450, has 52, 53 lines to a page; MS. T runs from 42 to 46; H and Hl. 3954 have 40 each.

<sup>2</sup> Wrath is also omitted in the feoffment in A II, 60-74, where the intention is clearly to give to False and Meed all the territories of the Seven Deadly Sins; but the loss involved is one of one line only, which may easily have been omitted in the original of all the extant MSS. In Skeat's text, l. 64, Lechery is also omitted; but the readings of four of the MSS. show that MS. V has merely omitted the words "of lecherie"—the only other MS. recorded in the textual note has the correct reading, but it is inserted in a later hand, this line as well as the preceding having been inadvertently omitted. It may be remarked that the author of the B-Text failed to observe the simple and systematic nature of this feoffment (perhaps because of the omission of Wrath), and consequently, in expanding it, entirely obliterated the original intention. This is only one of many instances to be cited in favour of my main thesis.

impossible to ascribe such an omission to an author whose work shows the firmness and mastery of structure exhibited in A. Let us, then, inquire whether the same accident that caused the confusion in regard to the confession of Sloth may not have caused the total loss of the confession of Wrath.

Comparison of the order of the Sins in A II, 60 ff. (and the corresponding passages in B and C) with A V, 45-235, B V, 63 ff.; C VII, 14 ff. will indicate that the proper place for Wrath in this passage is immediately after Envy. This is indeed the usual order, and Chaucer, following Peraldus,<sup>1</sup> says: "After Envye wol I discryven the sinne of Ire. For soothly, whoso hath envye upon his neighebor, anon he wole comunly finde him a matere of wratthe."<sup>2</sup> The place for Wrath in Passus V is therefore between l. 106 and l. 107. Between this point and ll. 235, 236, where the confusion in regard to Sloth occurs, there are 129 lines. Now it is clear that, if the two leaves of a sheet are gone, as we suppose, the gaps will be separated by four pages, or a multiple of four.<sup>3</sup> In the present instance the distance between the gaps makes about four pages of the size discussed above, and the lost double leaf was, therefore, the next to the innermost of a section or gathering. We might leave the matter here, but a little further inquiry will determine the precise number of lines to the page in the MS., and incidentally confirm our reasoning. The number of lines between the gaps is in Skeat's edition 129, as I have said; but l. 182 is in H only, and as Skeat suspects, is spurious, "being partly imitated from l. 177;" furthermore, ll. 202-7 are found in U only, and the first word of l. 208 shows that they are spurious, and that l. 208 should immediately follow l. 201. Seven lines must therefore be deducted from 129 to ascertain the number lying between the two gaps in the original. This will give us 122 lines, or two less than four pages of 31 each. As the number of lines to a page is never absolutely constant (Skeat finds it necessary to attach a *circa* to every statement of this kind), this would seem entirely satisfactory; but if space of one line was left between Covetousness and Gluttony, and between Gluttony and Sloth, the whole 124 would be exactly accounted for.<sup>4</sup>

Confirmation of this argument may perhaps be found in a circumstance pointed out to me by Mr. T. A. Knott, one of my students. He calls attention to the abruptness of the close of the confession of Envy, which has, of

<sup>1</sup> K. O. Petersen, *The Sources of the Parson's Tale*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *P. T.*, § 32, v. 533.

<sup>3</sup> Of course the two gaps would make only one if the lost double leaf were the middle one of a section or gathering.

<sup>4</sup> Clearly there were no headings, as in some MSS. of B and C, for none of the MSS. descended from A have them, but there may have been an interval of a line between the confessions. This supposition is, however, of little moment to the argument.

course, been noted by everyone; he thinks it not only abrupt, but unsatisfactory, and suggests that the leaf lost at this point contained, not only the whole of the confession of Wrath, but also a few concluding lines belonging to Envy.

Still further confirmation, slight though it be, may be found, it occurs to me, in the fact that, while not only every new section, but every new paragraph, in some of the MSS. collated by Professor Skeat, is indicated by a paragraph mark, none stands at the beginning of l. 236. And whatever may be thought of my contention that ll. 236-41 do not belong to Sloth, it is at least certain that they constitute a new paragraph. If they belong to Sloth, the mark was omitted by error; if to Robert the Robber, no mark stands there because the paragraph does not begin there but earlier, as the conjunction "And" indeed indicates.

We have found, then, that the hypothesis of a lost leaf between l. 235 and l. 236 not only explains all the difficulties of the text at that point—such as the inappropriateness of ll. 236-41 to Sloth, their true relation to ll. 242-59, the abrupt ending of the confession of Sloth and the absence of a paragraph mark at l. 236—but also accounts for the unaccountable omission of the confession of Wrath and for the abruptness of the end of the confession of Envy.

The omission of Wrath and the confusion as to Sloth were noticed by B, and he treated them rather ingeniously. He introduced into the earlier part of Sloth's confession a declaration that he had often been so slothful as to withhold the wages of his servants and to forget to return things he had borrowed. To supply the omission of Wrath, he himself wrote a *Confessio Irae*, totally different in style from the work of A, and, indeed, more appropriate for Envy than for Wrath, containing as it does no very distinctive traits of Wrath. The additions both here and in the confession of Sloth are confused, vague, and entirely lacking in the finer qualities of imagination, organization, and diction shown in all A's work. He did not attempt to deal with the other difficulties we have found.

It is possible, I suppose, to accept my argument up to the beginning of the preceding paragraph, and still maintain that B was after all the author of A also and merely rectified in his second version errors that had crept into his first. To do this, however, one must resolutely shut one's eyes to the manifest and manifold differences in mental qualities, in constructive ability, in vividness of diction, in versification, and in many other matters, that exist between A I-VIII and B. These will form a part of the volume in which I hope to define the portions of this great poem to be allotted to each of the principal writers engaged upon it, to set forth clearly their differences, and to vindicate for the first author the rank he clearly deserves. The work will

not be, I think, entirely one of destructive criticism. The poem, as a whole, will gain in interest and significance; and the intellectual life of the second half of the fourteenth century will seem even more vigorous than it has seemed.

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Dr. Henry Bradley's Letter in *The Athenæum*, April 21, 1906, p. 481, on Prof. Manly's discovery.

THE MISPLACED LEAF OF 'PIERS THE PLOWMAN.'

Clarendon Press, Oxford.

The January number of *Modern Philology* contains an article by Prof. J. M. Manly, entitled 'The Lost Leaf of Piers the Plowman,' in which the author endeavours to account for certain strange incoherences in the fifth Passus of the A-text of the poem. He has, I think, shown beyond doubt that they cannot have proceeded from the poet himself, but must have been due to accidents that happened to an archetypal MS. By this discovery, which has a very important bearing on the criticisms of the later recensions of the poem, Prof. Manly has established a claim to the gratitude of scholars, although, as I propose to show, the particular hypothesis by which he has attempted to account for the phenomena is not the correct one.

The Passus describes how, moved by the eloquent preaching of Conscience, the personifications of the seven deadly sins came forward in succession to confess their guilt and promise amendment. The story is admirably told on the whole, but has two surprising faults. In the first place, the confession of Wrath, which ought to come in between those of Envy and Covetousness, is, in all the MSS. of the A-text, omitted altogether. In the second place, the confession of Sloth, who comes last of the seven, is made to end with six lines, in which he irrelevantly promises restitution of ill-gotten gains, and is followed by eighteen lines, in which "Robert the robber" bewails his crimes, and vows henceforth to lead an honest life. The Passus consists of only 263 lines; and if we are to suppose that in this short space the poet managed to perpetrate these two extraordinary blunders, we must ascribe to him a degree either of thoughtlessness or of stupidity not easily conceivable. The supposition by which Prof. Manly tries to relieve the poet from this charge is, that a MS. from which all the existing MSS. descend, had lost two leaves—one between lines 106 and 107, containing the confession of Wrath, and the other between lines 235 and 236, containing the conclusion of the confession of Sloth, and some matter leading up to the confession of Robert the robber. As the interval between the two supposed lacunæ would occupy

four pages containing about 31 lines each (which would be a likely size in a MS. of the period), Prof. Manly concludes that the two lost leaves formed the innermost fold but one in a quire or gathering.

This hypothesis is undeniably ingenious; but unfortunately it does not fully answer its purpose of vindicating the poet from the charge of bad workmanship. It does, no doubt, enable us to escape the incredible conclusion that he forgot to mention one of the seven deadly sins, and represented Sloth as promising restitution of fraudulent gains. But it leaves us still under the necessity of supposing that, after relating in succession the confessions of the personifications of the seven sins, he introduced at the end a new penitent, whose offences, according to mediæval classification, belong to one of the branches of Covetousness. It can, I think, be shown that the poet was not guilty of this blunder of construction.

Prof. Manly has failed to perceive that the proper place of lines 236-59 is after line 145, at the end of the confession of Covetousness. In this position they not only fit perfectly, but actually improve the sense. But how are we to account for their transposition? In my opinion, the source of all the mischief is to be sought, not in a MS. written on parchment arranged in quires or gatherings, but in the "copy" (to use the word in the modern printer's sense) handed by the author to the first transcriber. This would no doubt be written on loose leaves of paper. It appears that one (or more) of these leaves (containing the confession of Wrath and the end of the confession of Envy) got lost, and that another (containing lines 236-59) was misplaced. It is possible that the transposed leaf was put in the place of a lost leaf, the last but one of the Passus. But I doubt whether this supposition is really necessary; the confession of Sloth no doubt ends rather abruptly, as do some of the other confessions, but I am not sure that anything is wanting.

Prof. Manly states that his study of 'Piers the Plowman' has led him to the conclusion that the three recensions known as A, B, and C are the work of three different authors. The evidence in support of this revolutionary theory is reserved for a forthcoming book; but Prof. Manly points out in his paper that the B revision of A. v. is based on the present defective text, and that the reviser attempted to remedy its faults in somewhat unintelligent fashion. The fact seems to be unquestionable, and certainly affords *prima facie* a strong argument against the received theory of unity of authorship. My correction of Prof. Manly's hypothesis only adds force to his argument. Even allowing for the fifteen years' interval which, according to Prof. Skeat, separates the dates of the A and B texts, it would be surprising if a poet, in revising his own work, failed to detect an accidental transposition that destroyed the symmetry of his plan. It is, by the way, a

noteworthy fact (whatever its precise interpretation may be) that the C revision restores the passage about "Robert the robber" to what I consider to be its original place.

Whether Prof. Manly will be successful in establishing his new theories respecting the history of the text remains to be seen; but he is certainly entitled to the credit of having initiated a new stage in the progress of Langland criticism.

The rejection of the unity of authorship of the three texts of 'Piers the Plowman' would of course involve the abandonment of Prof. Skeat's almost universally accepted attribution of 'Richard the Redeless' to Langland. An interesting fact, hitherto, so far as I know, unnoticed, is that Bale ('Index,' ed. Poole, p. 479) mentions the latter poem, on the authority of Nicholas Brigham, under the title 'Mum, Soth-segger!' (*i. e.* 'Hush, truth-teller!'). There can be no doubt of the identity of the piece referred to, for Bale gives a Latin translation of the first two lines. The title is certainly appropriate, and so picturesque that it may well have proceeded from the author. Unluckily, the poem appears to have been anonymous in the copy seen by Brigham.

HENRY BRADLEY.

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See also Mr. Theophilus Hall's Article in *The Modern Language Review* for October 1908, showing how impossible it is that the author of A could have so spoilt his own good work, and many passages of the B-man, in the way that the writer of the C-Text has done. Prof. Manly has some dozen Papers by clever pupils of his who have studied the question from different points of view—alliteration, metre, vocabulary, figurative language, &c.,—and all come to the same conclusion, that the revisers of the A-text into B, and B into C, cannot have been the A-man.

## CHAPTER I

### *PIERS THE PLOWMAN* AND ITS SEQUENCE

FEW poems of the Middle Ages have had a stranger fate than those grouped under the general title of *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*. Obviously very popular in the latter half of the fourteenth century, the time of their composition, they remained popular throughout the fifteenth century, were regarded in the sixteenth by the leaders of the reformation as an inspiration and a prophecy, and, in modern times, have been quoted by every historian of the fourteenth century as the most vivid and trustworthy source for the social and economic history of the time. Yet their early popularity has resulted in the confusion of what is really the work of five different men, and in the creation of a mythical author of all these poems and one other; and the nature of the interest of the sixteenth century reformers has caused a misunderstanding of the objects and aims of the satire contained in the poems separately and collectively. Worst of all, perhaps, the failure of modern scholars to distinguish the presence of several hands in the poems has resulted in a general charge of vagueness and obscurity, which has not even spared a portion of the work remarkable for its clearness and definiteness and structural excellence.

Before taking up any of the problems just suggested, we may recall briefly certain undisputed facts as to the form of the poems. They are written throughout in alliterative verse of the same general type as that of *Beowulf* and other Old English poems, and, at first sight, seem to form one long poem, extant in versions differing somewhat from one another. As Skeat has conclusively shown in his monumental editions of the texts, there are three principal versions or texts, which he designates the A-text, the B-text and the C-text, or the Vernon, the Crowley and the Whitaker versions respectively. The A-text, or Vernon version, supposed of three visions supposed to come to the author while

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sleeping beside a stream among the Malvern hills. The first of these, occupying the prologue and passus I—IV, is the vision of the field full of folk—a symbol of the world—and Holy Church and Lady Meed; the second, occupying passus V—VIII, is the vision of Piers the Plowman and the crowd of penitents whom he leads in search of Saint Truth; the third, occupying passus IX—XII, is a vision in which the dreamer goes in search of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best, but is attacked by hunger and fever and dies ere his quest is accomplished. The B-text and the C-text are successive modifications and expansions of the A-text.

Let us turn now from fact to theory. The two principal authorities, Skeat and Jusserand, though differing in details, agree, in the main, in the account they give of the poems and the author; and their account is very generally accepted. It is as follows. The author was William Langland (or Langley), born about 1331—2 at Cleobury Mortimer, 32 miles S.S.E. from Shrewsbury and 137 N.W. from London, and educated in the school of the Benedictine monastery at Malvern, among the hills S.W. of Worcester. Whether he was the son of freemen (Skeat's view) or of serfs (Jusserand's view), he was, at any rate, educated for the church and probably took minor orders; but, because of his temperament, his opinions, his marriage, or his lack of influential friends, he never rose in the church. At some unknown date, possibly before 1362, he removed to London and made a scanty living by singing masses, copying legal documents and other similar casual occupations. In 1362, he began his famous poems, writing first the vision of Lady Meed and the vision of Piers the Plowman. Perhaps immediately, perhaps after an interval of some time, he added to these the vision of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best. This first version of these poems constitutes what is now called the A-text of *Piers the Plowman*. But, according to the current view, the author did not leave matters thus. Encouraged by the success of his work and impelled by his increasing indignation at the corruptions of the age, he took up his poem again in 1377 and expanded it to more than twice its original length. The lines of the earlier version he left essentially unchanged; but he inserted, here and there, additions of greater or less length, suggested now by some word or phrase of the original text, now by events in the world about him and his meditations on them; and he rejected the whole of the final passus, containing an imaginary account of his death, to replace it by a continuation of the vision of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best longer than the whole of the original version of the poem. The



A-text had contained a prologue and four passus (or cantos) of the vision of Lady Meed, four passus of the vision of Piers the Plowman and four passus of the vision of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best, or twelve passus in all, with a total of 2567 lines. The B-text runs parallel to this to the end of passus XI (but with 3206 lines instead of 2467), and then continues for nine more passus, making a total of 7242 lines. The author's active interest in his poem did not cease here, however, for he subjected it to another revision, about 1393 (according to Skeat) or 1398 (according to Jusserand). This revision is known as the C-text. Its relation to the B-text may be roughly stated as consisting in the insertion of a few passages, the rearrangement of a considerable number and the rewriting of a number of others with more or less change of content or of emphasis, but, on the whole, as involving no such striking differences from the B-text as exist between that and the A-text. This latest version numbers 7357 lines as against the 7242 of the second version.

Skeat and Jusserand ascribe to the same author another poem in alliterative verse, commonly known as *Richard the Redeless*, concerning the last years of the reign of Richard II. This poem, which, as we have it, is a fragment, was, Skeat thinks, written between the capture and the formal deposition of Richard in 1399, and was, perhaps, left unfinished by the author in consequence of the fate of the king.

The evidence relied upon to prove that all these poems were the work of a single author is entirely the internal evidence of the poems themselves, supposed similarity in ideas, style, diction, etc., together with the difficulty of supposing the existence, at, approximately, the same time, of several unknown writers of such ability as is displayed in these poems. Undoubtedly, the first impulse of any student of a group of poems related as these are is to assume that they are the work of a single author, and that any statements made in the poems concerning the personality and experiences of the dreamer are autobiographical revelations. Moreover, in this particular case, it will be remembered, each of the two later versions incorporates with its additions the preceding version; and, as the C-text, on account of the larger mass of material in it, has received the almost exclusive attention of scholars, the impression of the style and other literary qualities gained by the modern student has, necessarily, been a composite of the qualities of the three texts and not a distinct sense of the qualities of each and the differences between them.

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Such differences do exist, and in the greatest number and variety. There are differences in diction, in metre, in sentence structure, in methods of organising material, in number and kind of rhetorical devices, in power of visualising objects and scenes presented, in topics of interest to the author and in views on social, theological and various miscellaneous questions. Some of these have, indeed, been observed and discussed by previous writers, but they have always been explained as due to such changes as might occur in any man's mental qualities and views of life in the course of thirty or thirty-five years, the interval between the earliest and the latest version. To the present writer the differences seem of such a nature as not to admit of such an explanation; and this opinion is confirmed by the existence of certain passages in which the authors of the later versions have failed to understand their predecessors.

This is, of course, not the place for polemics or for a detailed examination of all the problems suggested by the poems. Our principal concern is with the poems themselves as literary monuments and, if it may be, with their author or authors. But, for this very reason, it seems necessary to present the poems in such a way as to enable the student to decide for himself between the two theories of authorship, inasmuch as this decision carries with it important conclusions concerning the literary values of the poems, the mental qualities of the authors and the intellectual activity of the age to which they belong. Fortunately, such a presentation is precisely that which will best set forth the contents of the poems and their qualities.

Let us examine first the prologue and passus I-VIII of the A-text. This is not an arbitrary dismemberment of a poem. The two visions included in these passus are intimately connected with each other and definitely separated from what follows. At the beginning of the prologue the dreamer goes to sleep among the Malvern hills and sees a vision of the world in the guise of a field full of folk thronging a valley bounded on one side by a cliff, on which stands the tower of Truth, and, on the other, by a deep dale, in which, surrounded by a dark moat, lies the dungeon of Wrong. Within this valley begin the incidents of his first vision, and, though they range far, there is never any suggestion of discontinuity; at the end of the vision the dreamer wakes for only a moment, and, immediately falling asleep, sees again the same field of folk and another series of events unfolding themselves in rapid succession beneath the cliff with its high-built tower, until,

finally, he wakes 'meatless and moneyless in Malvern hills.' The third vision, on the other hand, has no connection with Malvern hills; the dreamer sees nothing of his valley, with the folk and the tower and the dungeon; indeed, this is not a vision at all in the sense of the first two, but, rather, a series of dream-visits and dream-discussions, the like of which cannot be found in the first two visions. Skcat himself has recognised the close connection between the first two visions, and has suggested that the third may have been written after a considerable interval.

Each of the first two visions in the A-text is, contrary to the usual opinion, distinguished by remarkable unity of structure, directness of movement and freedom from digression of any sort. The author marshals his dream-figures with marvellous swiftness, but with unerring hand; he never himself forgets for a moment the relation of any incident to his whole plan, nor allows his reader to forget it, or to feel at a loss as to its meaning or its place.

We first see, with the vividness of the dreamer's own vision, the thronging crowd in the valley beneath the tower of Truth and hovering on the brink of the dark dale. People of all sorts are there—the poor and the rich, saints and sinners of every variety, living as they live in the world. Singly and in groups they pass before us, each noted by the poet with a word or a phrase that gives us their very form and pressure. Satire there is, but it is satire which does not impede the movement of the thronged dream, satire which flashes and plays about the object, revealing its inner nature by a word, an epithet, a brief phrase. We see the false beggars shamming for food and fighting at the ale-house, 'great lubbers and long that loth were to labour'; the friars, 'preaching the people for profit of their bellies'; the pardoner, surrounded by the crowd of ignorant believers, whom he deceives with his papal bull and his fair speech; and the corrupt priest, taking his share of the ill-gotten gains, while the bishop, who is not 'worth his two ears,' refuses to interfere. Then come a hundred lawyers in hoods of silk, ready to undertake any cause for money, but refusing 'to unloose their lips once for love of our Lord'; 'you could more easily,' says the poet, 'measure the mist on Malvern hills than get a mum of their mouths unless money were showed.' After them appears a confused throng of churchmen of all degrees, all 'leaping to London' to seek worldly offices and wealth. Wasters there are, and idle labourers 'that do their deeds ill and drive forth the long day with singing *Dieu save Dame Emme!*' Along with the satire there is commendation, now for the ploughmen who

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work hard and play seldom; now, of a higher sort, for pious nuns and hermits; now, for honest merchants; now, even for harmless minstrels who 'get gold with their glee.' But, neither satire nor commendation delays even for a moment our rapid survey of this marvellous motley crowd, or detracts from our feeling that, in this valley of vision, the world in miniature is visibly moving, living, working, cheating, praying, singing, crying for sale its 'hot pies,' its 'good geese and pigs,' its 'white wine and red.'

The author, having thus, in his prologue, set before us the vision first presented to the eyes of his mind, proceeds to interpret it. This he does characteristically by a further development of the dream itself.

A lovely lady comes down from the cliff and says to the dreamer:

Son, seest thou this people, how engrossed they are in this confusion? The most part of the people that pass now on earth, if they have success in this world, care for nothing else; of other heaven than here they take no account.

The impression already made upon us by this strange majestic figure is deepened by the author's vivid comment, 'I was afeard of her face, fair though she was, and said, "Mercy, my lady; what is the meaning of this?"' The tower, she explains, is the dwelling of Truth, the Father of our faith, who formed us all and commanded the earth to serve mankind with all things needful. He has given food and drink and clothing to suffice for all, but to be used with moderation, for excess is sinful and dangerous to the soul. The dreamer enquires curiously about money: 'the money on this earth that men so fast hold, tell me to whom that treasure belongs.' 'Go to the Gospel,' she replies, 'and consider what Christ himself said when the people apposed him with a penny.' He then asks the meaning of the dungeon in the deep dale.

That is the castle of Care; whoso comes therein may ban that he was born to body or to soul; in it dwells a wight named Wrong, the father of False, who seduced Adam and Cain and Judas. He is a hinderer of love, and deceives all who trust in their vain treasures.

Wondering who she is that utters such wisdom, the dreamer is informed that she is Holy Church. 'Thou oughtest to know me; I received thee first and taught thee faith, and thou didst promise to love me loyally while thy life should endure.' He falls upon his knees, beseeching her favour and begging her to teach him so to believe on Christ as to do His will: 'Teach me to no treasure but tell me this, how I may save my soul!'

‘When all treasure is tried,’ she declares, ‘Truth is the best; it is as precious as God himself. Whoso is true of his tongue and of his deeds, and does ill to no man, is accounted to the Gospel and likened to our Lord. Truth is claimed by Christian and non-Christian; it should be kept by all. Kings and knights are bound by it, cherubim and seraphim and all the orders of angels were knighted by Christ and taught to know Truth. Lucifer and his fellows failed in obedience, and sinned by pride, and fell; but all who keep Truth may be sure that their souls shall go to heaven to be crowned by Truth; for, when all treasure is tried, Truth is the best.’ ‘But what is it? By what quality or power of my nature does it begin, and where?’ ‘Thou fool, it is a teaching of nature to love thy Lord dearer than thyself, and do no deadly sin though thou shouldst die. This is Truth, and none can teach thee better; it is the most precious thing demanded by our Lord. Love began by the Father and was perfected in the death of his Son. Be merciful as He was merciful, for, unless you live truly, and love and help the poor, you have no merit in Mass or in Hours. Faith without works is dead; chastity without charity is as foul as an unlighted lamp. *Date et dabitur vobis*, this is the lock of love that lets out my grace to comfort all sinful; it is the readiest way that leads to heaven.’

With this Holy Church declares that she can stay no longer, and *passus I* closes.

But the dreamer kneels and beseeches her, crying,

‘Mercy, my lady, for the love of her that bore the blissful Babe that redeemed us on the cross; teach me to know False!’ ‘Look on thy left hand and see where he stands—both False and Favel (Duplicitly) and all his whole house.’ I looked on the left hand as the lady taught me; and I saw a woman wonderfully clothed, arrayed in furs the richest on earth, crowned with a crown no less costly than the king’s, all her five fingers loaded with rings, with the most precious stones that prince ever wore. ‘Who is this woman,’ said I, ‘thus richly attired?’ ‘That is the maiden Meed, who has often injured me. To-morrow will the marriage be made of her and False. Favel brought them together, Guile prepared her for it and Liar has directed the whole affair. I warn thee that thou mayst know them all, and keep thyself from them, if thou desirest to dwell with Truth in his bliss. I can stay no longer; I commit thee to our Lord.’

All the rich retinue that held with False was bidden to the bridal. Simony was sent for to seal the charters and feoff Meed with all the possessions of False and Favel. But there was no house that could hold the throng that came. In a moment, as if by some magical process, we see a pavilion pitched on a hill, with ten thousand tents set about it, for all men of all orders to witness the feoffment of Meed. Then Favel brought her forth, and Simony and Civil (Civil Law) stood forth and unfolded the charter, which was drawn up in due legal form and endowed the contracting parties with all the provinces of the seven deadly sins, ‘to have and to hold, and all their heirs after, with the appurtenance of Purgatory, even to the torment of Hell; yielding, for this thing, at the year’s end, their souls to Satan.’ This was duly witnessed

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and delivered. But Theology objected to the wedding, because Meed was no bastard and should be wedded according to the choice of Truth.

The workman is worthy of his hire. False is no mate for her; she is of good birth and might kiss the king for cousin. Take her to London and see if the law will permit this wedding; and beware, for Truth is wise, and Conscience, who knows you all, is of his counsel.

Civil agreed, but Simony demanded money for his services. Then Favel brought forth gold, and began to bribe officers and witnesses; and all promised to go to London and support his claims before the court at Westminster.

The incident which follows is one of the best examples of the author's power of visualisation and of rapid narration unbroken by explanation or moralisation; for the moralising lines, unfortunately admitted into Skeat's text, which interrupt the narrative and tend to delay and obscure it, do not belong to the original, but are found in one MS only. [To the rapidity and assurance with which the picture is developed is, perhaps, due in no small part the readiness with which we accept it and the vitality and solidity which these personified abstractions maintain throughout the dream.]

'Then they lacked horses to carry them thither, but Favel brought forth foals of the best. He set Meed on a sheriff's back, shod all new, and False on a juror that trotted softly.' In like manner for each of the abstractions was provided some appropriate, concrete evil-doer; and, thus equipped, the fantastic crew immediately set out. But Soothness saw them well, and said little, but rode hard and came first to court. There he told Conscience, and Conscience reported to the king, all that had happened. 'Now, by Christ,' said the king, 'if I might catch False or any of his fellows, I would hang them by the neck.' Dread, standing at the door, heard his doom, and went wightly to warn False. At the news, the wedding party fled in all directions. False fled to the friars, Liar leaped away lightly, lurked through lanes, buffeted by many and ordered to leave, until pardoners had pity on him and received him as one of themselves. Then he was in demand: physicians and merchants and minstrels and messengers wanted him; but the friars induced him to come with them. Of the whole wedding party, only Meed durst stay, and she trembled and wept and wrung her hands when she was arrested.

In passus III the king orders that Meed shall be treated courteously, and declares that he himself will ask her whom she

wishes to wed, and, if she acts reasonably, he will forgive her. So a clerk brought her to the chamber. At once people began to profess friendship for her and promise aid. The justices came, and said, 'Mourn not, Meed; we will clear thee.' She thanked them and gave them cups of clean gold and rings with rubies. Clerks came, and said, 'We are thine own, to work thy will while life lasts.' She promised to reward them all: 'no ignorance shall hinder the advancement of him whom I love.' A confessor offered to shrive her for a seam of wheat and to serve her in any evil. She told him a tale and gave him money to be her bedesman and her bawd. He assoiled her, and then suggested that, if she would help them with a stained glass window they were putting in, her name would be recorded on it and her soul would be sure of heaven. 'Knew I that,' said the woman, 'there is neither window nor altar that I would not make or mend, and inscribe my name thereon.' Here the author declares the sin of such actions, and exhorts men to cease such inscriptions, and give alms. He also urges mayors to punish brewers, bakers, butchers and cooks, who, of all men on earth, do most harm by defrauding the poor. 'Meed,' he remarks, 'urged them to take bribes and permit such cheating; but Solomon says that fire shall consume the houses of those who take bribes.'

Then the king entered and had Meed brought before him. He addressed her courteously, but said, 'Never hast thou done worse than now, but do so no more. I have a knight called Conscience; wilt thou marry him?' 'Yea, lord,' said the lady, 'God forbid else!' Conscience was called and asked if he would wed her.

Nay, Christ forbid! She is frail of her flesh, fickle, a causer of wantonness. She killed father Adam and has poisoned popes. She is as common as the cart-way; she releases the guilty and hangs the innocent. She is privy with the pope, and she and Simony seal his bulls. She maintains priests in concubinage. She leads the law as she pleases, and suppresses the complaints of the poor.

Meed tried to defend herself by charging that Conscience had caused greater evils. He had killed a king. He had caused a king to give up his campaign in Normandy.

Had I been the king's marshal, he should have been lord of all that land. A king ought to give rewards to all that serve him; popes both receive and give rewards; servants receive wages; beggars, alms; the king pays his officers; priests expect mass-pence; craftsmen and merchants, all take meed.

The king was impressed by this plea, and cried, 'By Christ, Meed is worthy to have such mastery.' But Conscience kneeled,

and explained that there are two kinds of meed; the one, such as God gives to men who love him; the other, such as maintains evil-doers. 'Such as take bribes shall answer for it; priests that take money for masses have their reward on earth only. Wages is not meed, nor is there meed in the bargains of merchants.' He then illustrates the dangers of meed by the story of Saul and the Amalekites, and ends by declaring that Reason shall reign and govern realms; Meed shall no more be master, but Love and Humility and Loyalty shall rule, and Kind-Wit and Conscience together shall make Law a labourer, such love shall arise.

The king interrupted him and tried to effect a reconciliation between him and Meed, but Conscience refused, unless advised thereto by Reason. 'Ride forth and fetch Reason; he shall rule my realm,' replied the king. Conscience rode away gladly and returned with Reason, followed by Wit and Wisdom. The king welcomed Reason, and set him on the throne, between himself and his son; and, while they were talking together, Peace came, and put up a bill how Wrong had taken his wife, had stolen his geese, his pigs, his horse and his wheat, had murdered his men and beaten him. Wrong was afraid and tried to bribe Wisdom to plead for him. Wisdom and Wit told him that, without the help of Meed, he was ruined, and they took him to her. Peace showed the king his bloody head; and the king and Conscience knew he had been wronged; but Wisdom offered bail for Wrong and payment of the damages, and Meed offered Peace a present of gold; whereupon Peace begged the king to have mercy upon Wrong. The king swore he would not. Some urged Reason to have pity, but he declared that he would not

till all lords and ladies love truth, and men cease to spoil children, and clerks and knights are courteous, and priests practise what they preach, till the custom of pilgrimages and of carrying money out of the land ceases, till Meed has no might to moot in this hall. Were I king, no wrong should go unpunished or get grace by bribes. Were this rule kept, Law would have to become a labourer, and Love should rule all.

When they heard this, all held Reason a master and Meed a wretch. Love laughed Meed to scorn. The king agreed that Reason spoke truth, but said it would be hard to establish such government. Reason asserted that it would be easy. Whereupon the king begged Reason to stay with him and rule the land as long as he lived. 'I am ready,' said Reason, 'to rest with thee ever; provided Conscience be our counsellor, I care for nothing better.' 'Gladly,' said the king; 'God forbid that he fail; and, as long as I live, let us keep together!'



Thus ends passus IV, and, with it, the first vision. The style and the method of composition are, in the highest degree, worthy of note. The author, it will be observed, sets forth his views, not, after the ordinary fashion of allegorists, by bringing together his personifications and using them as mere mouthpieces, but by involving them in a rapidly moving series of interesting situations, skilfully devised to cause each to act and speak in a thoroughly characteristic manner. They do not seem to be puppets, moving and speaking as the showman pulls the strings, but persons, endowed each with his own life and moved by the impulses of his own will. Only once or twice does the author interrupt his narration to express his own views or feelings, and never does he allow them to interfere with the skill or sincerity of expression of the *dramatis personae*. His presentation has, indeed, the clear, undisturbed objectivity of excellent drama, or of life itself.

In the prologue, the satire, as has been observed, is all incidental, casual; the same is true of passus I; for these two sections of the poem are not essentially satirical. The first is a purely objective vision of the world with its mingled good and evil; the second is the explanation of this vision with some comment and exhortation by Holy Church, the interpreter. The satire proper begins with passus II, and, from there to the end of this vision, is devoted to a single subject—Meed and the confusion and distress which, because of her, afflict the world. Friars, merchants, the clergy, justices, lawyers, all classes of men, indeed, are shown to be corrupted by love of Meed; but, contrary to current opinion, there is nowhere even the least hint of any personal animosity against any class of men as a class, or against any of the established institutions of church or state. The friars have often been supposed to be the special object of attack, but, so far as this vision is concerned, they fare better, on the whole, than do the lawyers. The only notable order of fourteenth century society that escapes censure altogether is that of the monks. Of them there is no direct criticism, though some of the MSS include monks among those to whom Meed is common (III, 127—8). The possible bearing of this fact upon the social status of the author will be discussed later.

As to the style, no summary or paraphrase can reproduce its picturesqueness and verve. It is always simple, direct, evocative of a constant series of clear and sharply-defined images of individuals and groups. Little or no attempt is made at elaborate, or even ordinarily full, description, and colour-words are singularly

few; but it would be difficult to find a piece of writing from which the reader derives a clearer vision of individuals or groups of moving figures in their habit as they lived. That the author was endowed in the highest degree with the faculty of visualisation is proved, not merely by his ability to stimulate the reader to form mental images, but even more by the fact that all the movements of individuals and groups can be followed with ease and certainty. Composition, in the larger sense of structural excellence, that quality common in French literature, but all too rare in English, and supposed to be notably lacking in *Piers the Plowman*, is one of the most striking features of this first vision.

What has just been said of the qualities of the first vision is true in equal degree of the second, *The Vision of Piers the Plowman*, properly so called, which occupies passus v—viii. In outline it is as follows :

At the close of the preceding vision, the king and his company went to the church to hear the services. The dreamer saw them enter, and awaked from his dream disappointed and sorrowful that he had not slept more soundly and seen more. But, ere he had gone a furlong, a faintness seized him, and he sat softly down and said his creed; then he fell asleep and saw more than he had seen before. He saw again the field full of folk and Conscience with a cross preaching among them, urging them to have pity on themselves and declaring that the pestilences were caused by their sins, and that the great storm of wind on Saturday at even (15 January 1362) was a punishment for pride. Wasters were warned to go to work; chapmen to cease spoiling their children; Pernel, to give up her purple; Thomas and Wat, to look after their frail and extravagant wives; priests, to practise what they preached; members of the religious orders, to keep their vows, lest the king and his council should take possession of their property; pilgrims, to cease journeying to St James, and seek St Truth. Then ran Repentance and moved the hearts of all; William wept; Pernel Proudheart prostrated herself; Lecher, Envy, Covetousness, Glutton, Sloth, Robert the Robber, all repented. The confessions of the seven deadly sins (an accident has deprived us of the confession of Wrath and of a portion of Envy's) follow one another with breathless rapidity, and the climax is reached when, in the words of the author, 'a thousand of men then thronged together, crying upward to Christ and to His pure Mother to have grace to seek St Truth—God grant they so may!'

With this *passus v* closes; but the movement of the narrative is uninterrupted. Some spurious lines printed by Skeat do, indeed, cause a semblance of at least a momentary delay; but the authentic text is better constructed.

There were few so wise, however, that they knew the way thither (*i.e.* to St Truth), but blustered forth as beasts over valleys and hills, till it was late and long that they met a person appalled like a pilgrim, with relics of the many shrines he had visited. He had been at Sinai, Bethlehem, Babylon, Armenia, Alexandria and in many other places, but had never heard of St Truth, nor met a palmer seeking such a saint.

‘By St Peter!’ cried a ploughman, and put forth his head, ‘I know him as well as a clerk his book; Conscience and Kind-Wit directed me to him and taught me to serve him ever. I have been his man these fifteen years, sowed his seed, kept his beasts, diked and delved and done his bidding in all things.’

The pilgrims offered him money to show them the way; but Piers, the ploughman, cried,

Nay, by the peril of my soul! I would not take a penny for the whole wealth of St Thomas’s shrine; Truth would love me the less. But this is the way. You must go through Meekness till you come to Conscience-that-Christ-knows-that-you-love-him-dearer-than-the-life-in-your-hearts-and-your-neighbour-next. Then cross the brook Be-buxom-of-speech by the ford Honour-thy-father; pass by Swear-not-in-vain and the croft Covet-not, with the two stocks Slay-not and Steal-not; stop not at Bear-no-false-witness, and then will be seen Say-sooth. Thus shalt thou come to a court, clear as the sun; the moat is of Mercy, the walls of Wit, to keep Will out, the cornells of Christendom, the brattice of Faith, the roof of Brotherly Love. The tower in which Truth is set above the sun; he may do with the day-star what him dear liketh; Death dare do naught that he forbids. The gate-keeper is Grace, his man is Amend-thou, whose favour thou must procure. At the gate also are seven sisters, Abstinence, Humility, Charity, Chastity, Patience, Peace and Generosity. Any of their kin are welcomed gladly, and, unless one is kin to some of these seven, he gets no entrance except by grace.

‘By Christ,’ cried a cut-purse, ‘I have no kin there!’ And so said some others; but Piers replied, ‘Yes; there is there a maiden, Mercy, who has power over them all. She is sib to all sinful, and, through help of her and her Son, you may get grace there, if you go early.’

*Passus VII* opens with the remark that this would be a difficult way without a guide at every step. ‘By Peter!’ replied Piers, ‘were my half-acre ploughed, I would go with you myself.’ ‘That would be a long delay,’ said a lady; ‘what shall we women do meanwhile?’ ‘Sew and spin and clothe the needy.’ ‘By Christ!’ exclaimed a knight, ‘I never learned to plough; but teach me, and I will help you.’ But Piers rejected his offer and bade him

do only those services that belong to knighthood, and practise the virtues of a kindly lord. The knight promised to do so, and Piers prepared for his ploughing. Those who helped were to be fed. Before setting out on his journey, however, he wished to make his will, bequeathing his soul to God, his body to the church, his property to his wife to divide among his friends and his dear children.

Piers and the pilgrims set to work; some helped him to plough, others diked up the balks, others plucked weeds. At high prime (9 a.m.) Piers looked about and saw that some had merely been singing at the ale and helping him with 'hey, trolly-loly!' He threatened them with famine, and the shirkers feigned to be lame or blind, and begged alms. 'I shall soon see if what you say is true,' said Piers; 'those who will not work shall eat only barley bread and drink of the brook. The maimed and blind I will feed, and anchorites once a day, for once is enough.' Then the wasters arose and would have fought. Piers called on the knight for protection, but the knight's efforts were vain. He then called upon Hunger, who seized Waster by the maw and wrung him so that his eyes watered, and beat the rascals till he nearly burst their ribs. Piers in pity came between them with a pease-loaf. Immediately all the sham ailments disappeared; and blind, bedridden, lame asked for work. Piers gave it to them, but, fearing another outbreak, asked Hunger what should be done in that event. The reply, which contains the author's view of the labour-problem, was that able-bodied beggars were to be given nothing to eat but horse-bread and dog-bread and bones and thus driven to work, but the unfortunate and the naked and needy were to be comforted with alms. In reply to a further question whether it is right to make men work, Hunger cited *Genesis*, *Proverbs*, *Matthew* and the *Psalms*. 'But some of my men are always ill,' said Piers. 'It comes of over-eating; they must not eat until they are hungry, and then only in moderation.' Piers thanked him, and gave him leave to go whenever he would; but Hunger replied that he would not go till he had dined. Piers had only cheese, curds, an oat-cake, a loaf of beans and bran and a few vegetables, which must last till harvest; so the poor people brought peascods, beans and cherries to feed Hunger. He wanted more, and they brought pease and leeks. And in harvest they fed him plentifully and put him to sleep. Then beggars and labourers became dainty and demanded fine bread and fresh meats, and there was grumbling about wages and cursing of the king and

his council for the labour-laws. The author warns workmen of their folly, and prophesies the return of famine.

In passus VIII we are told that Truth heard of these things and sent to Piers a message to work and a pardon *a poena et a culpa* for him and his heirs. Part in this pardon was granted to kings, knights and bishops who fulfil their duties. Merchants, because of their failure to observe holidays, were denied full participation; but they received a letter from Truth under his privy seal authorising them to trade boldly, provided they devoted their profits to good works, the building of hospitals, the repairing of bridges, the aiding of poor maidens and widows and scholars. The merchants were glad, and gave Will woollen clothes for his pains in copying their letter. Men of law had least pardon, because of their unwillingness to plead without money; for water and air and wit are common gifts, and must not be bought and sold. Labourers, if true and loving and meek, had the same pardon that was sent to Piers. False beggars had none for their wicked deeds; but the old and helpless, women with child, the maimed and the blind, since they have their purgatory here upon earth, were to have, if meek, as full pardon as the Plowman himself.

Suddenly a priest asked to see Piers' pardon. It contained but two lines: *Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam; qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.* 'By St Peter!' said the priest, 'I find here no pardon, but "do well, and have well, and God shall have thy soul; and do evil, and have evil, and to hell shalt thou go."' Piers, in distress, tore it asunder, and declared that he would cease to labour so hard and betake himself to prayers and penance, for David ate his bread with weeping, and Luke tells us that God bade us to take no thought for ourselves, but to consider how He feeds the birds. The priest then jested at the learning of Piers, and asked who taught him. 'Abstinence and Conscience,' said Piers. While they were disputing, the dreamer awoke and looked about, and found that it was noontime, and he himself meatless and moneyless on Malvern hills.

Here the vision ends, but passus VIII contains 53 lines more, in which the writer discusses the trustworthiness of dreams and the comparative value of Do-well and letters of indulgence.

In this second vision, the satire of passus V is very general, consisting, as it does, of a series of confessions by the seven deadly sins, in which each is sketched with inimitable vividness and brevity. It is significant of the author's religious views, and in

harmony with such hints of them as he has given us elsewhere, that these confessions are not formal interviews with an authorised confessor, but, for the most part, sudden outcries of hearts which Conscience has wrought to contrition and repentance. The notable exceptions are the cases of Glutton and Sloth. Of these, the former has often been cited as one of the most remarkable pieces of *genre* painting in our early literature. It presents the veritable interior of an English ale-house in the fourteenth century, with all its basenesses and its gross hilarity.

Glutton is moved to repent, and starts for the church to confess, but, on his way thither, the ale-wife cries out to him. He says he is going to church to hear mass and confess. 'I have good ale, gossip; wilt thou try it?' He does not wish to drink, but asks if she has any spices to settle a queasy stomach. 'Yes, full good: pepper, peony, a pound of garlic and a little fennel-seed, to help toppers on fasting days.' So Glutton goes in, and finds a crowd of his boon companions, Cis the shoemaker's wife, Wat the warrener and his wife, Tomkin the tinker and two of his men, Hick and Hodge and Clarice and Pernel and a dozen others; and all welcome him and offer him ale. Then they begin the sport called the New Fair, a game for promoting drinking. The whole day passes in laughter and ribaldry and carousing, and, at even-song, Glutton is so drunk that he walks like a gleeman's dog, sometimes aside and sometimes aback. As he attempts to go out, he falls; and his wife and servant come, and carry him home and put him to bed. When he wakes, two days later, his first word is, 'Where is the cup?' But his wife lectures him on his wickedness, and he begins to repent and profess abstinence.

As for Sloth, his confession, though informal, is not sudden, for the sufficient reason that he is too slothful to do anything suddenly.

The satire of *passus* VI and VII is directed principally, if not solely, against the labouring classes. In sentiment and opinion the author is entirely in harmony with parliament, seeing in the efforts of the labourers to get higher wages for their work only the unjustifiable demands of wicked, lazy, lawless vagabonds. In regard to the remedy, however, he differs entirely from parliament. He sees no help in the Statutes of Labourers or in any power that the social organisation can apply; the vain efforts of the knight when called upon by Piers for protection from the wasters (VII, 140 ff.) clearly indicate this. The only hope of the re-establishment of good conditions lies in the possibility that the wicked may be terrified by the prospect of famine, God's punishment for

their wickedness, and may labour and live as does Piers Plowman, the ideal free labourer of the established order. The author is in no sense an innovator; he is a reformer only in the sense of wishing all men to see and feel the duties of the station in life to which they belong, and to do them as God has commanded.

PASSUS VIII is an explicit presentation of this idea, a re-assertion of the doctrine announced by Holy Church at the beginning of passus I and illustrated by all the visionary events that follow—the doctrine, namely, that, ‘When all treasure is tried, Truth is the best.’ The pardon sent to Piers is only another phrasing of this doctrine; and, though Piers himself is bewildered by the jibes of the priest and tears the pardon ‘in pure teen,’ though the dreamer wakes before the advent of any reassuring voice, and wakes to find himself hungry and poor and alone, we know authentically that there lies in the heart of the author not even the slightest question of the validity of his heaven-sent dreams.

The third vision, passus IX—XII of the A-text, differs from the first two, as has been said above, in very material respects. The theme is not presented by means of vitalised allegory; there are allegorical figures, to be sure, but their allegorical significance is only superficial, not essential; they engage in no significant action, but merely indulge in debate and disquisition; and what they say might be said by any one else quite as appropriately and effectively. Moreover, the clearness of phrasing, the orderliness and consecutiveness of thought, which so notably characterise the early visions, are entirely lacking, as are also the wonderful visualisation and vivid picturesqueness of diction. These differences are so striking that they cannot be overlooked by any one whose attention has once been directed to them. To the present writer they seem to justify the conclusion that in the third vision we have, not a poem written by the author of the first two, either immediately after them or even a few years later, but the work of a continuator, who tried to imitate the previous writer, but succeeded only superficially, because he had not the requisite ability as a writer, and because he failed to understand what were the distinctive features in the method of his model; but students of the poems have heretofore felt—without, I think, setting definitely before their minds the number and the character of these differences—that they were not incompatible with the theory of a single author for all the poems.

It is not intended to argue the question here, and, consequently,

the differences will not be discussed further; but it may be of interest, to those who believe in a single author no less than to those who do not, to note, in addition, certain minor differences. The first writer seems not in the least interested in casuistry or theological doctrine, whereas notable features of the later passus are scholastic methods and interests, and a definite attitude towards predestination, which had been made by Bradwardine the foremost theological doctrine of the time, as we may infer from Chaucer and the author of *Pearl*. Indeed, the questions that interest the author of passus IX—XI are not only entirely different, but of a different order from those which interest the author of the first two visions. Further, the use of figurative language is entirely different; of the twelve similes in passus IX—XI four are rather elaborate, whereas all the twenty found in the earlier passus are simple, and, for the most part, stock phrases, like 'clear as the sun,' only four having so much as a modifying clause. The versification also presents differences in regard to the number of stresses in the half-line and in regard to run-on lines and masculine endings. Some of these differences begin to manifest themselves in the last fifty-three lines of passus VIII; and it is possible that the continuator began, not at IX, 1, but at VIII, 131. Of course, no one of the differences pointed out is, in itself, incompatible with the theory of a single author for all the passus of the A-text; but, taken together, they imply important differences in social and intellectual interests and in mental qualities and habits. They deserve, therefore, to be noted; for, if the same person is the author of all three visions, he has at least undergone profound and far-reaching changes of the most various kinds, and no mere general supposition of development or decay of his powers will explain the phenomena.

We proceed, then, without further discussion, to examine the contents of the later passus. Their professed subject is the search for Do-well, Do-better and Do-best, or, rather, for satisfactory definitions of them. What were the author's own views, it is very hard to determine; partly, perhaps, because he left the poem unfinished, but partly, also, because the objections which, as a disputant, he offers to the statements of others seem, sometimes, only cavils intended to give emphasis and definiteness to the views under discussion. It will be observed, however, that, on the whole, his model man is not the plain, honest, charitable labourer, like Piers, but the dutiful ecclesiastic. Other topics that are clearly of chief interest to the author are: the personal



responsibility of sane adults, and the vicarious responsibility of guardians for children and idiots; the duty of contentment and cheerful subjection to the will of God; the importance of pure and honourable wedlock; and the corruptions that have arisen, since the pestilence, in marriage and in the attitude of laymen towards the mysteries of faith, though Study, voicing, no doubt, the views of the author, admits that, but for the love in it, theology is a hard and profitless subject. There are also incidental discussions of the dangers of such branches of learning as astronomy, geometry, geomancy, etc.; of the chances of the rich to enter heaven; of predestination; and of the advantages as to salvation of the ignorant over the learned. A brief synopsis of these passus will make the method of treatment clearer.

Passus IX opens with the author roaming vainly about in his grey robes in search of Do-well, not in a dream, but while he is awake. At last, on a Friday, he meets two Franciscan friars, who tell him that Do-well dwells always with them. He denies this, in due scholastic form, on the ground that even the righteous sin seven times a day. The friars meet this argument by a rather confused illustration of a boat in which a man attempts to stand in a rough sea, and, though he stumbles and falls, does not fall out of the boat. The author declares he cannot follow the illustration, and says farewell. Wandering widely again, he reaches a wood, and, stopping to listen to the songs of the birds, falls asleep.

There came a large man, much like myself, who called me by name and said he was Thought. 'Do-well,' said Thought, 'is the meek, honest labourer; Do-better is he who to honesty adds charity and the preaching of sufferance; Do-best is above both and holds a bishop's crosier to punish the wicked. Do-well and Do-better have crowned a king to protect them all and prevent them from disobeying Do-best.'

The author is dissatisfied; and Thought refers him to Wit, whom they soon meet, and whom Thought questions on behalf of the dreamer (here called 'our Will.')

In passus x, Wit says that Duke Do-well dwells in a castle with Lady Anima, attended by Do-better, his daughter, and Do-best. The constable of the castle is Sir Inwit, whose five sons, See-well, Say-well, Hear-well, Work-well and Go-well, aid him. Kind, the maker of the castle, is God; the castle is Caro (Flesh). Anima is Life; and Inwit is Discretion (not Conscience), as appears from a long and wandering discussion of his functions. Do-well destroys vices and saves the soul. Do-well is the fear of the Lord, and Do-better is the fear of punishment. If Conscience tells you that

you do well, do not desire to do better. Follow Conscience and fear not. If you strive to better yourself, you are in danger; a rolling stone gathers no moss and a jack of all trades is good at none. Whether you are married man, monk, canon, or even beggar, be content and murmur not against God. Do-well is dread, and Do-better is sufferance; and of dread and its deeds springs Do-best. As the sweet red rose springs from the briar, and wheat from a weed, so Do-best is the fruit of Do-well and Do-better, especially among the meek and lowly, to whom God gives his grace. Keepers of wedlock please God especially; of them come virgins, martyrs, monks, kings, etc. False folk are conceived in an ill hour, as was Cain. His descendants were accursed; and so were those of Seth, who intermarried with them, though warned against it. Because of these marriages, God ordered Noah to build the ark, and sent the flood to destroy Cain's seed. Even the beasts perished for the sin of these marriages. Nowadays, since the pestilence, many unequal marriages are made for money. These couples will never get the Dunmow fitch. All Christians should marry well and live purely, observing the *tempora clausa*. Otherwise, rascals are born, who oppose Do-well. Therefore, Do-well is dread; and Do-better is sufferance; and so comes Do-best and conquers wicked will.

In passus XI, Wit's wife, Study, is introduced. She rebukes him for casting pearls before swine, that is, teaching wisdom to those who prefer wealth. Wisdom is despised, unless carded with covetousness as clothiers card wool; lovers of Holy Writ are disregarded; minstrelsy and mirth have become lechery and bawdy tales. At meals, men mock Christ and the Trinity, and scorn beggars, who would perish but for the poor. Clerks have God much in the mouth but little in the heart. Every 'boy' cavils against God and the Scriptures. Austin the Old rebukes such. Believe and pray, and cavil not. Here now is a foolish fellow that wants to know Do-well from Do-better. Unless he live in the former, he shall not learn the latter.

At these words, Wit is confounded, and signals the author to seek the favour of Study. He, therefore, humbles himself, and Study is appeased, and promises to direct him to Clergy (Learning) and his wife, Scripture. The way lies by Sufferance, past Riches and Lechery, through Moderation of speech and of drink, to Clergy.

Tell him you were sent by me, who taught him and his wife. I also taught Plato and Aristotle and all craftsmen. But theology has troubled me much;

and, save for the love in it, it is naught. Love is Do-well; and Do-better and Do-best are of Love's school. Secular science teaches deceit, but theology teaches love. Astronomy, geometry, geomancy, alchemy, necromancy and pyromancy are all evil; if you seek Do-well, avoid them. I founded them to deceive the people.

The author goes at once to Clergy and his wife and is well received by them. Clergy says that Do-well is the active life, Do-better is charity and Do-best is the clergy with benefices and power to help and possessions to relieve the poor. Runners-about are evil; there are many such now, and the religious orders have become rich. 'I had thought kings and knights were best, but now I see that they are not.' Scripture interrupts with the declaration that kingship and knighthood and riches help not to heaven, and only the poor can enter. '*Contra!*' says the author; 'Whoever believes and is baptised shall be saved.' Scripture replies that baptism saves only *in extremis* and only repentant heathen, whereas Christians must love and be charitable. Help, therefore, and do not harm, for God says, 'Slay not! for I shall punish every man for his misdeeds, unless Mercy intervenes.' The author objects that he is no nearer his quest, for whatever he may do will not alter his predestined end; Solomon did well and wisely and so did Aristotle, and both are in hell.

If I follow their words and works and am damned, I were unwise; the thief was saved before the patriarchs; and Magdalen, David, and Paul did ill, and yet are saved; Christ did not commend Clergy, but said, 'I will teach you what to say'; and Austin the Old said that the ignorant seize heaven sooner than the learned.

Passus XII opens with the reply of Clergy: 'I have tried to teach you Do-well, but you wish to cavil. If you would do as I say, I would help you.' Scripture scornfully replies, 'Tell him no more! Theology and David and Paul forbid it; and Christ refused to answer Pilate; tell him no more!' Clergy creeps into a cabin and draws the door, telling the author to go and do as he pleases, well or ill. But the author earnestly beseeches Scripture to direct him to Kind-Wit (Natural Intelligence), her cousin and confessor. She says he is with Life, and calls, as a guide, a young clerk, *Omnia-probate*. 'Go with Will,' she orders, 'to the borough *Quod-bonum-est-tenete* and show him my cousin's house.' They set out together.

And here, it seems to me, this author ceased. The remaining lines I believe to have been written by one John But. They relate that, ere the author reached the court *Quod-bonum-est-tenete*, he met with many wonders. First, as he passes through

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Youth, he meets Hunger, who says that he dwells with Death, and seeks Life in order to kill him. The author wishes to accompany him, but, being too faint to walk, receives broken meats from Hunger, and eats too much. He next meets Fever, who dwells with Death and is going to attack Life. He proposes to accompany Fever; but Fever rejects his offer and advises him to do well and pray constantly.

Will knew that this speech was speedy; so he hastened and wrote what is written here and other works also of Piers the Plowman and many people besides. And, when this work was done, ere Will could espy, Death dealt him a dint and drove him to the earth; and he is now closed under clay, Christ have his soul! And so bade John But busily very often, when he saw these sayings alleged about James and Jerome and Job and others; and because he meddles with verse-making, he made this end. Now God save all Christians and especially king Richard and all lords that love him! and thou, Mary, Mother and Maiden, beseech thy Son to bring us to bliss!

Skeat originally ascribed to John But only the last twelve lines, beginning, 'And so bade John But.' It seems unlikely, however, that the 'end' which John But says he made refers to these lines only; certainly, it is not customary for scribes to use such a term for the supplications they add to a poem. And it is hard to conceive the motive of the author for finishing in this hasty fashion a poem which interested him, and which obviously had such immediate success. For these or similar reasons Skeat, later, admitted the possibility that the work of John But began seven lines earlier, with 'Will knew that this speech was speedy.' But the same reasoning applies to all the lines after L 56, and an attentive reading of them will disclose several particulars at variance with the style or conceptions of the rest of the poem.

In closing our survey of the poems included in the A-text, we may note that, in their own day, they were not regarded as directed against the friars, for MS Rawl. Poet. 137 contains this inscription, 'in an old hand': *Hoc volumen conceditur ad usum fratrum minorum de observantia cantuariae.*

Let us turn now to the B-text. There is no reason to doubt the current view that it was written, in part at least, between June 1376 and June 1377. Tyrwhitt showed that the famous rat-parliament inserted in the prologue referred to the time between the death of the Black Prince and that of Edward III, and must have been written while men were anxious about the situation which then existed. The increased emphasis given to the pesti-

lences in B, also points, as Skeat suggests, to a time not long after the pestilence of 1376. To these may be added the allusion to the drought and famine of April 1370 (XIII, 269—271) as 'not long passed.' No one, perhaps, believes that the whole of the B-text was written within the year indicated; but it has been generally assumed that the additions in the prologue antedate the rest of the B-text. For this assumption there is no reason except that the prologue is at the beginning of the poem. Two considerations suggest, though they by no means prove, that B, in his additions and insertions, did not always follow the order of the original poem. In the first place, in X, 115 is a promise of a discussion which occurs in XII. Any one who studies carefully B's methods of composition will find it easier to believe that B had already written XII when he thus referred to it, than that he purposely postponed a discussion. In the second place, it is hard to believe that such a writer as B, after becoming so thoroughly excited over political affairs as he shows himself to be in his insertion in the prologue, would have written the 4036 lines of his continuation of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best without again discussing them.

The author of the B-text, as we have seen, had before him, when he began his work, the three visions of the A-text. Whether he regarded them as the work of a single author is not our present concern. In his reworking of the poems he practically disregarded passus XII and changed the preceding eleven passus by insertions and expansions. Minor verbal alterations he also made, but far fewer than is usually supposed. Many of those credited to him are to be found among the variant readings of the A-text, and were merely taken over unchanged from the MS of A used as the basis.

Of the nine principal insertions made in the first two visions, six may be regarded as mere elaborations of the A-text, namely, the changed version of the feoffment, the confessions of Wrath, Avarice, Glutton and Sloth and the plea of Repentance. The other three, including the rat-parliament and the jubilee passages, are among the most important expressions of the political views of B, and will be discussed below. The insertions in the third vision, though elaborations of the A-text, are more difficult to characterise as to theme, on account of a tendency to rambling and vagueness sometimes almost degenerating into incoherency. The worst of them is the third (IX, 59—121), which ranges over indiscretion, gluttony, the duty of holy church to

fools and orphans; the duty of charity, enforced by the example of the Jews; definitions of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best; waste of time and of speech; God's love of workers and of those faithful in wedlock. A few lines translated from this passage may serve to illustrate the author's mental processes, particularly his incapacity for organised or consecutive thinking, and his helpless subjection to the suggestions of the words he happens to use. They will also explain why students of these poems have found it impossible to give a really representative synopsis of his work. Let us begin with L 88, immediately after the citation of the brotherly love of the Jews:

The commons for their unkindness, I fear me, shall pay. Bishops shall be blamed because of beggars. He is worse than Judas that gives a jester silver, and bids the beggar go, because of his broken clothes. *Proditor est prelatus cum Iuda, qui patrimonium Christi mimis distribuit.* He does not well that does thus, and dreads not God Almighty, nor loves the saws of Solomon, who taught wisdom; *Initium sapientiae, timor Domini*: who dreads God does well; who dreads him for love and not for dread of vengeance does, therefore, the better; he does best that restrains himself by day and by night from wasting any speech or any space of time; *Qui offendit in uno in omnibus est reus.* Loss of time—Truth knows the sooth!—is most hated on earth of those that are in heaven; and, next, to waste speech, which is a sprig of grace and God's gleeman and a game of heaven; would never the faithful Father that His fiddle were untempered or His gleeman a rascal, a goer to taverns. To all true tidy men that desire to work Our Lord loves them and grants, loud or still, grace to go with them and procure their sustenance. *Inquirentes autem Dominum non minuentur omni bono.* True-wedded-living folk in this world is Do-well, etc.

As will be seen from this fairly representative passage, the author does not control or direct his own thought, but is at the mercy of any chance association of words and ideas; as Jusserand well says, *il est la victime et non le maître de sa pensée.*

In the series of visions forming B's continuation of the poems, the same qualities are manifest, and the same difficulty awaits the student who attempts a synopsis or outline of them. It is possible, indeed, to state briefly the general situation and movement of each vision, to say, *e.g.* that this presents the tree of Charity, and this the Samaritan; but the point of view is frequently and suddenly and unexpectedly shifted; topics alien to the main theme intrude because of the use of a suggestive word; speakers begin to expound views in harmony with their characters and end as mere mouthpieces of the author; *dramatis personae* that belong to one vision suddenly begin to speak and act in a later one as if they had been present all the time; others disappear even more mysteriously than they come.

Even the first of the added visions shows nearly all these peculiarities. At the beginning of *passus* XI, continuing the conversation of *passus* X, Scripture scorns the author and he begins to weep. Forgetting that he is already asleep and dreaming, the author represents himself as falling asleep and dreaming a new dream. Fortune ravished him alone into the land of Longing and showed him many marvels in a mirror called Mydlerd (*i.e.* the World). Following Fortune were two fair damsels, *Concupiscencia-carnis* and *Covetyse-of-eyes*, who comforted him, and promised him love and lordship. Age warned him, but Recklessness and *Fauntelte* (Childishness) made sport of the warning. *Concupiscence* ruled him, to the grief of Age and Holiness, and *Covetyse* comforted him forty-five years, telling him that, while Fortune was his friend, friars would love and absolve him. He followed her guidance till he forgot youth and ran into age, and Fortune was his foe. The friars forsook him. The reader expects to learn that this is because of his poverty, but, apparently, another idea has displaced this in the author's mind; for the reason given by him is that he said he would be buried at his parish church. For this, the friars held him a fool and loved him the less. He replied that they would not care where his body was buried provided they had his silver—a strange reply in view of the poverty into which he had fallen—and asked why they cared more to confess and to bury than to baptise, since baptism is needful for salvation. *Lewte* (Loyalty) looked upon him, and he loured. 'Why dost thou lour?' said *Lewte*. 'If I durst avow this dream among men?' 'Yea,' said he. 'They will cite "Judge not!"' said the author.

Of what service were Law if no one used it? It is lawful for laymen to tell the truth, except parsons and priests and prelates of holy church; it is not fitting for them to tell tales, though the tale were true, if it touched sin. What is known to everybody, why shouldst thou spare to declare; but be not the first to blame a fault. Though thou see evil, tell it not first; be sorry it were not amended. Thing that is secret, publish it never; neither laud it for love nor blame it for envy.

'He speaks truth,' said Scripture (who belongs not to this vision but to the preceding), and skipped on high and preached. 'But the subject she discussed, if laymen knew it, they would love it the less, I believe. This was her theme and her text: "Many were summoned to a feast, and, when they were come, the porter plucked in a few and let the rest go away."' Thereupon the author begins a long discussion with himself on predestination.

It is obvious that such writing as this defies analytical

presentation; and this is no isolated or rare instance. In certain passages where the author is following a narrative already organised for him, as in the rat-parliament of the prologue, or the account of the life of Christ in passus XVI, the rambling is less marked; but, if the narrative is long or elaborate, the author soon loses sight of the plan, as may be seen in the curious treatment, in passus XIX and XX, of the themes derived from *The Castle of Love*. In the instance last cited, the hopeless wandering occurs on so large a scale that it appears even in the synopses prepared by Skeat and others. Of the instances which disappear in synopsis, one of the most interesting is that of Activa-Vita, in passus XIII and XIV. Skeat's synopsis is as follows: 'Soon they meet with one Activa-Vita, who is a minstrel and seller of wafers. Patience instructs Activa-Vita, and declares that beggars shall have joy hereafter.' But the significant features are here omitted. Activa-Vita is the honest labourer, who provides bread for everybody, but, because he cannot please lords with lies and lewd jests, receives little reward. He is the friend and follower of Piers the Plowman. Yet, since he is Activa-Vita, in contact with the world, he is not spotless. The author therefore begins to tell us of the spots on Activa-Vita's coat, and, naturally, distributes them in the categories of the seven deadly sins. As soon as he enters upon this task he is perfectly helpless; he cannot control himself or his conceptions; and, consequently, he represents poor Activa-Vita as guilty of every one of the sins in its most wicked and vilest forms. The author of the C-text removed these passages to the confessions that followed the preaching of Conscience in the second vision, possibly, as Skeat thinks, in order to bring together passages of similar content and treatment, but, possibly, because such a contradiction in the character of Activa-Vita was too gross and glaring.

Recognising, then, the limitations with which every synopsis of the continuation by B must be received, we may say, briefly, that B adds seven visions, two and a fraction devoted to Do-well, two and a fraction to Do-better and two to Do-best. In the first (passus XI) there is no allegorical action; the dreamer meets various allegorical characters, such as Fortune, Recklessness, Nature and Reason, and hears them talk or talks himself either to them or to his readers. The subjects discussed are, as we have seen, very various; but chief among them are predestination, the value of poverty, incompetent priests and man's failure to follow reason as animals do. Following this, but not a vision, though it is dis-



tinguished from one only by the fact that the author is awake, is a long disquisition by Imaginative, containing views concerning the dangers and the value of learning and wealth very different from those expressed in A XL. The second vision begins with a dinner, given by Reason, at which are present the dreamer, Conscience, Clergy, Patience and a doctor of the church. Again there is no allegorical action; the dinner is only a device to bring together the disputants, who discuss theological subtleties. Following the dinner comes the interview with Activa-Vita described above. Conscience and Patience then instruct Activa-Vita to make amends by contrition and confession, and discuss at great length the benefits of poverty. The next vision is notable, though not unique, in containing a vision within a vision. In the first part (passus xv) Anima (also called Will, Reason, Love, Conscience, etc., an entirely different character from the Anima of A ix) discourses for 600 lines, mainly on knowledge, charity and the corruptions of the age due to the negligence of prelates; in the second part, when Anima, after describing the tree of Charity, says that it is under the care of Piers the Plowman, the dreamer swoons, for joy, into a dream, in which he sees Piers and the tree, and hears a long account of the fruits of the tree which gradually becomes a narrative of the birth and betrayal of Christ. At the close of this he wakes, and wanders about, seeking Piers, and meets with Abraham (or Faith), who expounds the Trinity; they are joined by Spes (Hope); and a Samaritan (identified with Jesus) cares for a wounded man whom neither Faith nor Hope will help. After this, the Samaritan expounds the Trinity, passing unintentionally to an exposition of mercy; and the dreamer wakes. In the next vision (passus xix) he sees Jesus in the armour of Piers ready to joust with Death; but, instead of the jousting, we have an account of the crucifixion, the debate of the Four Daughters of God and the harrowing of hell. He wakes and writes his dream, and, immediately, sleeps again and dreams that Piers, painted all bloody and like to Christ, appears. Is it Jesus or Piers? Conscience tells him that these are the colours and coat-armour of Piers, but he that comes so bloody is Christ. A discussion ensues on the comparative merits of the names Christ and Jesus, followed by an account of the life of Christ. Piers is Peter (or the church), to whom are given four oxen (the evangelists) and four horses (the four fathers of the church) and four seeds to sow. A house, Unity, is built to store the grain, and is attacked by Pride and his host; but this is forgotten in the episodes of the brewer's refusal

to partake of the Sacrament, the vicar's attack on the cardinals and the justification by the king and lords of their own exactions. The dreamer wakes and encounters Need, who gives him instruction very similar to that of Conscience in the preceding dream. Falling asleep again, he has a vision of the attack of Antichrist and Pride and their hosts upon Unity, which insensibly becomes an attack by Death upon all mankind, varied by certain actions of Life, Fortune, Sloth, Despair, Avarice and the friar Flattery. Conscience, hard beset by Pride and Sloth, calls vainly for help to Contrition, and, seizing his staff, starts out on a search for Piers the Plowman. Whereupon the dreamer wakes.

Some scholars have regarded the poem as unfinished; others, as showing by the nature of its ending the pessimism of the author. It is true that it ends unsatisfactorily, and that one or more visions might well have been added; but it may be doubted whether the author ever could have written an ending that would have been artistically satisfactory. He had, as we have seen, no skill in composition, no control of his materials or his thought. The latter part of the poem is supposed to be devoted in regular order to Do-well, Do-better and Do-best; but it may be said, without injustice, that these subjects determine neither the nature of the main incidents nor the manner in which they are developed, and that what the author himself would doubtless have cited as the supreme expression of his view of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best occurs early in the vision of Do-well—I mean, of course, the famous *Disce, Doce, Dilige*, taught to Patience by his leman, Love. He could never have been sure of reserving to the end of his poem the subjects with which he intended to end, or of ceasing to write at the point at which he wished to cease. It remains curious, nevertheless, and, perhaps, significant, in view of the continual recurrence in the work of B of invectives against the corruptions of the age, that the poem does end with the triumph of Antichrist, and that there is no hint, as in Kirchmayer's *Pammachius*, of preparations for his defeat and the coming of an age of endless peace and good.

The reader who has been impressed with what has been said about the vagueness and lack of definite organisation and movement in B's work may be inclined to ask, What merits are his and what claim has he upon our interests? The reply is that his merits are very great indeed, being no less than those rated highest by previous students of the poems—Skeat, Jusserand, ten Brink, Henry Morley and a host of others. The very lack of

control, which is his most serious defect as an artist, serves to emphasise most convincingly his sincerity and emotional power, by the inevitableness with which, at every opportunity, he drifts back to the subjects that lie nearest his heart. Writing, as he did, without a definite plan and without power of self-direction, he touched, we may feel sure, not merely all subjects that were germane to his purpose, as a better artist would have done, but all that interested him deeply; and he touched most frequently those that interested him most. These subjects are, as is well known, the corruptions in the church, chiefly, perhaps, among the friars, but also, in no small measure, among the beneficed clergy; the dangers of riches and the excellence of poverty; the brotherhood of man; and the sovereign quality of love. To these should be added the idealisation of Piers the Plowman, elusive as are the forms which this idealisation often assumes. On the other hand, great as is the interest in political theory displayed by the author in the passages inserted in the prologue, this is not one of the subjects to which he constantly reverts; indeed, the only passage (XIX, 462—476) on this subject in the later passus touches it so lightly as to suggest that the author's interest in it at this time was very slight. The frequency with which subjects recur is, of course, not the only indication of the sincerity and depth of the author's interest; the vividness and power of expression are equally significant.

'Let some sudden emotion fill his soul,' says Jusserand, '...and we shall wonder at the grandeur of his eloquence. Some of his simplest expressions are real *trouvailles*; he penetrates into the innermost recesses of our hearts, and then goes on his way, and leaves us pondering and thoughtful, filled with awe.'

Such are:

And mysbede (mistreat) nouste thi bonde-men, the better may thow spede.

Though he be thyn underlynge here, wel may happe in hevене,

That he worth (shall be) worthier sette, and with more blisse,

Than thow, bot thou do bette, and live as thow sulde;

For in charnel atte chirche cherles ben yvel to knowe,

Or a knihte from a knave,—knowe this in thin herte. VI, 46 ff.

For alle are we Crystes creatures, and of his coffres riche,

And brethren as of o (one) blode, as wel beggares as erles. XI, 192 ff.

Pore peple, thi prisoneres, Lord, in the put (pit) of myschief,

Conforte tho creatures that moche care suffren,

Thorw dertþ, thorw drouth, alle her dayes here,

Wo in wynter tymes for wanting of clothes,

And in somer tyme selde (seldom) soupen to the fulle;

Comforte thi careful, Cryst, in thi ryche (kingdom)! XIV, 174 ff.

## 30 Piers the Plowman *and its Sequence*

The date usually assigned to the C-text is 1393—8. The only evidence of any value is the passage IV, 203—210, in which the author warns the king of the results of his alienation of the confidence and affection of his people. This, Skeat takes to be an allusion to the situation after the quarrel between the king and the Londoners in 1392; and, consequently, he selects 1393 as the approximate date of the poem, though he admits that it may be later. Jusserand argues that this local quarrel, which was soon composed, does not suit the lines of the poem as well as does the general dissatisfaction of 1397—9; and he, therefore, suggests 1398—9 as the date. Jusserand's view seems the more probable; but, even so early as 1386, parliament sent to inform the king that

*si rex . . . nec voluerit per jura regni et statuta ac laudibiles ordinationes cum salubri consilio dominorum et procerum regni gubernari et regulari, sed capitose in suis insanis consiliis propriam voluntatem suam singularem proterve exercere, extunc licitum est eis . . . regem de regali solio abrogare.*

(Knighton, II, 219.)

Of the changes and additions made by C we can here say very little, mainly for the reason that they are numerous, and small, and not in pursuance of any well-defined plan. There are multitudinous alterations of single words or phrases, sometimes to secure better alliteration, sometimes to get rid of an archaic word, sometimes to modify an opinion, but often for no discoverable reason, and, occasionally, resulting in positive injury to the style or the thought. Certain passages of greater or less length are entirely or largely rewritten, rarely for any important modification of view; never, perhaps, with any betterment of style. At times, one is tempted to think they were rewritten for the mere sake of rewriting, but many whole pages are left practically untouched. Transpositions occur, sometimes resulting in improvement, sometimes in confusion. Excisions or omissions may be noted which seem to have been made because C did not approve of the sentiments of the omitted passages; but there are other omissions which cannot be accounted for on this ground or on that of any artistic intention. The additions are all of the nature of elaborations or expansions and insertions. Some of these have attracted much attention as giving information concerning the life and character of the dreamer or author; these will be dealt with below. Others give us more or less valuable hints of the views and interests of the writer; such are: the passage accusing priests of image worship and of forging miracles; an account of the fall of Lucifer, with speculations as to why he made his seat in the

north; an attack on regraters; the long confused passage<sup>1</sup> comparing the two kinds of meed to grammatical relations. Still others modify, in certain respects, the opinions expressed in the B-text. For example, xv, 30—32 indicates a belief in astrology out of harmony with the earlier condemnation of it; the attitude on free-will in XI, 51—55 and XVII, 158—182 suggests that, unlike B, and the continuator of A, C rejected the views of Bradwardine on grace and predestination; several passages on riches and the rich<sup>2</sup> show a certain eagerness to repudiate any such condemnation of the rich as is found in B; and, finally, not only is the striking passage in B<sup>3</sup>, cited above, in regard to the poor, omitted, but, instead of the indiscriminate almsgiving insisted upon by B, C distinctly condemns it<sup>4</sup> and declares<sup>5</sup> that charity begins at home—‘Help thi kynne, Crist bit (bids), for ther begynneth charite.’

On the whole, it may be said that the author of the C-text seems to have been a man of much learning, of true piety and of genuine interest in the welfare of the nation, but unimaginative, cautious and a very pronounced pedant.

The reader may desire a justification, as brief as possible, of the conclusion assumed throughout this chapter that the poems known under the title, *Piers the Plowman*, are not the work of a single author. So much of the necessary proof has already been furnished in the exposition of the different interests and methods and mental qualities displayed in the several parts of the work that little more will be necessary. The problem seems very simple: the differences pointed out—and others which cannot be discussed here—do exist; in the absence of any real reason to assume that all parts of this cluster of poems are the work of a single author, is it not more probable that several writers had a hand in it than that a single writer passed through the series of great and numerous changes necessary to account for the phenomena? To this question an affirmative answer will, I think, be given by any one who will take the trouble to examine separately the work of A (*i.e.* A, prol.—passus VIII), the continuator of A (A, IX—XII, 55), B and C—that is, to read carefully any passages of fifty or a hundred lines showing the work of each of these authors unmixed with lines from any of the others. In such an examination, besides the larger matters discussed throughout this chapter, the metre and the sentence structure will repay

<sup>1</sup> IV, 335.<sup>2</sup> XIII, 154—247; XIV, 26—100; XVII, 21; XX, 232—246.<sup>3</sup> XIV, 174—180.<sup>4</sup> X, 71—281.<sup>5</sup> XVIII, 58—71.

special attention. The system of scansion used will make no difference in the result; but that expounded by Luick will bring out the differences most clearly. It will be found that the writers differ in their conceptions of the requirements of alliterative verse, A being nearest to the types established by Luick, both in regard to stresses and secondary stresses and in regard to alliteration. This can be most easily tested by Luick's plan of considering separately the second-half-lines. Another interesting test is that of the use of the visual imagination. A presents to his own mind's eye and to that of his reader distinct visual images of figures, of groups of figures and of great masses of men; it is he who, as Jusserand says, 'excels in the difficult art of conveying the impression of a multitude.' A also, through his remarkable faculty of visual imagination, always preserves his point of view, and, when he moves his action beyond the limits of his original scene, causes his reader to follow the movement; best of all for the modern reader, he is able, by this faculty, to make his allegory vital and interesting; for, though the world long ago lost interest in personified abstractions, it has never ceased to care for significant symbolical action and utterance. On the other hand, B, though capable of phrases which show, perhaps, equal power of visualising detail, is incapable of visualising a group or of keeping his view steady enough to imagine and depict a developing action. The continuator of A and the reviser C show clearly that their knowledge of the world, their impressions of things, are derived in very slight measure, if at all, from visual sensations. These conclusions are not invalidated, but rather strengthened, by the fondness of B and C and the continuator of A for similes and illustrations, such as never appear in A.

Moreover, the number of instances should be noted in which B has misunderstood A or spoiled his picture, or in which C has done the same for B. Only a few examples can be given here. In the first place, B has such errors as these: in II, 21 ff. Lewte is introduced as the leman of the lady Holy Church and spoken of as feminine; in II, 25, False, instead of Wrong, is father of Meed, but is made to marry her later; in II, 74 ff. B does not understand that the feoffment covers precisely the provinces of the seven deadly sins, and, by elaborating the passage, spoils the unity of the intention; in II, 176, B has forgotten that the bishops are to accompany Meed to Westminster, and represents them as borne 'abrode in visytynge,' etc., etc. Worst of all, perhaps, B did not notice that, by the loss or displacement of a leaf be-

tween A, v, 235, 236, the confessions of Sloth and Robert the Robber had been absurdly run together; or that in A, VII, 71—74 the names of the wife and children of Piers, originally written in the margin opposite ll. 89—90 by some scribe, had been absurdly introduced into the text, to the interruption and confusion of the remarks of Piers in regard to his preparations for his journey. Of C's failures to understand B two instances will suffice. In the prologue, 11—16, B has taken over from A a vivid picture of the valley of the first vision:

Thanne gan I to meten a merveilouse swevene,  
That I was in a wildernesse, wist I never where;  
As I behelde in-to the est an hiegh to the sonne,  
I seigh a toure on a toft, trielich ymakend;  
A depe dale benethe, a dongeon there-inne,  
With depe dyches and derke and dredful of sight.

C spoils the picture thus:

And merveylously me mette, as ich may 3ow telle;  
Al the welthe of this worlde and the woo bothe,  
Wynkyng, as it were, wyterly ich saw hyt,  
Of tryuthe and of tricherye, of tresoun and of gyle,  
Al ich saw slepyng, as ich shal 3ow telle.  
Esteward ich byhulde, after the sonne,  
And sawe a toure, as ich trowede, truthe was ther-ynne;  
Westwarde ich waitede, in a whyle after,  
And sawe a deep dale; deth, as ich lyuede,  
Woned in tho wones, and wyckede spiritus.

The man who wrote the former might, conceivably, in the decay of his faculties write a passage like the latter; but he could not, conceivably, have spoiled the former, if he had ever been able to write it. Again, in the famous rat-parliament, the rat 'renable of tonge' says:

I have ysein segges in the cite of London  
Beren bijes ful brijte abouten here nekkes,  
And some colers of crafty werk; uncoupled thei wenden  
Bothe in wareine and in waste, where hem leve lyketh;  
And otherwhile thei aren elles-where, as I here telle.  
Were there a belle on here beis, bi Ihesu, as me thynketh,  
Men myzte wite where thei went, and awei renne!

B, *Prolog.* 160—6.

Clearly the 'segges' he has seen wearing collars about their necks in warren and in waste are dogs. C, curiously enough, supposed them to be men:

Ich have yseie grete syres in cytees and in tounes  
Bere byzes of bryzt gold al aboute hure neckes,  
And colers of crafty werke, bothe knyztas and squiers.  
Were ther a belle on hure byze, by Iesus, as me thynketh,  
Men myzte wite wher thei wenten, and hure wey roume!

## 34 Piers the Plowman *and its Sequence*

Other misunderstandings of equal significance exist in considerable number; these must suffice for the present. I may add that a careful study of the MSS will show that between A, B and C there exist dialectical differences incompatible with the supposition of a single author. This can be easily tested in the case of the pronouns and the verb *are*.

With the recognition that the poems are the work of several authors, the questions concerning the character and name of the author assume a new aspect. It is readily seen that the supposed autobiographical details, given mainly by B and C, are, as Jack conclusively proved several years ago, not genuine, but mere parts of the fiction. Were any confirmation of his results needed, it might be found in the fact that the author gives the names of his wife and daughter as Kitte and Kalote. Kitte, if alone, might not arouse suspicion, but, when it is joined with Kalote (usually spelled 'callet'), there can be no doubt that both are used as typical names of lewd women, and are, therefore, not to be taken literally as the names of the author's wife and daughter. The picture of the dreamer, begun by A in prologue, 2, continued by the continuator in IX, 1 and elaborated by B and C, is only a poetical device, interesting in itself but not significant of the character or social position of any of these authors. Long Will, the dreamer, is, obviously, as much a creation of the muse as is Piers the Plowman.

What shall we say of the name, William Langland, so long connected with the poems? One MS of the C-text has a note in a fifteenth century hand (but not early):

*Memorandum, quod Stacy de Rokayle, pater Willielmi de Langlond, qui Stacius fuit generosus et morabatur in Schiptone under Whicwode, tenens domini le Spenser in comitatu Oxon., qui praedictus Willielmus fecit librum qui vocatur Perys Ploughman.*

Another fifteenth century note in a MS of the B-text says: 'Robert or William langland made pers ploughman.' And three MSS of the C-text (one, not later than 1427) give the author's name as 'Willelmus W.' Skeat is doubtless right in his suggestion that the name Robert arose from a misreading of C, XI, 1; but he and Jusserand find in B, xv, 148:

I have lyved in londe, quod I, my name is long wille,  
confirmation of the first note quoted above. It is possible, however, that this is really the source of the name. Curiously enough, this line is omitted by C, either because he wished to suppress it or because he did not regard it as significant. Furthermore,



Pearson showed pretty conclusively that, if the author was the son of Stacy de Rokayle (or Rokesle) of Shipton-under-Wychwood, his name, if resembling Langland at all, would have been Langley. If this were the case, Willelmus W. might, obviously, mean William of Wychwood, as Morley suggested, and be merely an alternative designation of William Langley—a case similar to that of the Robertus Langelye, alias Robertus Parterick, *capellanus*, who died in 19 Richard II, possessed of a messuage and four shops in the Flesh-shambles, a tenement in the Old Fish-market and an interest in a tenement in Staining-lane, and who may, conceivably, have had some sort of connection with the poems. It is possible, of course, that these early notices contain a genuine, even if confused, record of one or more of the men concerned in the composition of these poems. One thing, alone, is clear, that Will is the name given to the figure of the dreamer by four, and, possibly, all five, of the writers; but it is not entirely certain that A really meant to give him a name. Henry Bradley has, in a private letter, called my attention to certain facts which suggest that Will may have been a conventional name in alliterative poetry.

If we cannot be entirely certain of the name of any of these writers except John But, can we determine the social position of any of them? John But was, doubtless, a scribe, or a minstrel like the author of *Wynnere and Wastoure*. B, C and the continuator of A seem, from their knowledge and theological interests, to have been clerics, and, from their criticisms of monks and friars, to have been of the secular clergy. C seems inclined to tone down criticisms of bishops and the higher clergy, and is a better scholar than either the continuator of A (who translated *non mecabaris* by 'slay not' and *tabescebam* by 'I said nothing') or B (who accepted without comment the former of these errors). A, as has been shown already, exempts from his satire no order of society except monks, and may himself have been one; but, as he exhibits no special theological knowledge or interests, he may have been a layman.

In one of the MSS of the B-text occurs a fragment of a poem which is usually associated with *Piers the Plowman*. It has no title in the MS and was called by its first editor, Thomas Wright, *A Poem on the Deposition of Richard II*; but Skeat, when he re-edited it in 1873 and 1886, objected to this title as being

inaccurate, and re-named it *Richard the Redeless*, from the first words of passus I. Henry Bradley has recently called attention to the fact that it was known to Nicholas Brigham in the first part of the sixteenth century as *Mum, Sothsegger* (i.e. Hush, Truthteller). There can be no doubt that this was, as Bradley suggests, the ancient title; for it is not such a title as would have been chosen either by Brigham or by Bale, who records it. The copy seen by Brigham, as it had a title, cannot have been the fragmentary copy that is now the only one known to us. Wright regarded the poem as an imitation of *Piers the Plowman*; Skeat undertook to prove, on the basis of diction, dialect, metre, statements in the text itself, etc., that it was the work of the same author. But claims of authorship made in these poems are not conclusive, as will be seen in the discussion of the *Ploughman's Tale*; and the resemblances in external form, in dialect, in versification, etc., on which Skeat relies, are not greater than might be expected of an imitator, while there are such numerous and striking differences in diction, versification, sentence structure and processes of thought from every part of *Piers the Plowman*, that identity of authorship seems out of the question. The poem, as has been said, is a fragment; and Skeat thinks that it may have been left unfinished by the author in consequence of the deposition of Richard. But the MS in which it is found is not the original, but a copy; and the prologue seems to imply that the poem had been completed when the prologue was written. The author professes to be a loyal subject and friendly adviser of Richard, but the tone of the poem itself is strongly partisan to Henry of Lancaster, and, curiously enough, nearly all the remarks in regard to Richard imply that his rule was entirely at an end. This latter fact is, of course, not incompatible with Skeat's view that the poem was written between the capture and the formal deposition of Richard, i.e. between 18 August and 20 September 1399. As to the form and contents of the poem, it is not a vision, but consists of a prologue, reciting the circumstances of its composition, and three passus and part of a fourth, setting forth the errors and wrongs of Richard's rule. Passus I is devoted to the misdeeds of his favourites. Passus II censures the crimes of his retainers (the White Harts) against the people, and his own folly in failing to cherish such men as Westmoreland (the Greyhound), while Henry of Lancaster (the Eagle) was strengthening his party. Passus III relates the unnaturalness of the White Harts in attacking the Colt, the Horse, the Swan and the Bear,

with the return of the Eagle for vengeance, and then digresses into an attack upon the luxury and unwisdom of Richard's youthful counsellors. Passus IV continues the attack upon the extravagance of the court, and bitterly condemns the corrupt parliament of 1397 for its venality and cowardice.

The influence of *Piers the Plowman* was wide-spread and long-continued. There had been many satires on the abuses of the time (see Wright's *Political Poems* and *Political Songs and Poems*), some of them far bitterer than any part of these poems, but none equal in learning, in literary skill and, above all, none that presented a figure so captivating to the imagination as the figure of the Ploughman. From the evidence accessible to us it would seem that this popularity was due, in large measure, to the B-text, or, at least, dated from the time of its appearance, though, according to my view, the B-text itself and the continuation of A were due to the impressiveness of the first two visions of the A-text.

Before discussing the phenomena certainly due to the influence of these poems, we must devote a few lines to two interesting but doubtful cases. In 1897, Gollancz edited for the Roxburghe Club two important alliterative poems, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* and *Wynnere and Wastoure*, both of which begin in a manner suggestive of the beginning of *Piers the Plowman*, and both of which contain several lines closely resembling lines in the B-text of that poem. The lines in question seem, from their better relation to the context, to belong originally to *Piers the Plowman* and to have been copied from it by the other poems; if there were no other evidence, these poems would, doubtless, be placed among those suggested by it; but there is other evidence. *Wynnere and Wastoure* contains two allusions that seem to fix its date at c. 1350, and *The Parlement* seems to be by the same author. The two allusions are to the twenty-fifth year of Edward III (l. 206), and to William de Shareshull as chief baron of the exchequer (l. 317). The conclusion is, apparently, inevitable that the imitation is on the part of *Piers the Plowman*. In *The Parlement* the author goes into the woods to hunt, kills a deer and hides it. Then, falling asleep, he sees in a vision three men, Youth, Middle-Age and Age, clad, respectively, in green, grey and black, who dispute concerning the advantages and disadvantages of the ages they represent. Age relates the histories of the Nine Worthies,

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and declares that all is vanity. He hears the bugle of Death summoning him, and the author wakes. In *Wynnere and Wastoure* the author, a wandering minstrel, after a prologue bewailing the degeneracy of the times and the small respect paid to the author of a romance, tells how

Als I went in the weste wandrynge myn one,  
 Bi a bonke of a bourne bryghte was the sonne.  
 . . . . .  
 I layde myn hede one an hill ane hawthorne besyde.  
 . . . . .  
 And I was swythe in a sweren sweped belyve;  
 Methoghte I was in a werlde, I ne wiste in whate ende.

He saw two armies ready to fight; and

At the creste of a cliffe a caban was rered,

ornamented with the colours and motto of the order of the Garter, in which was the king, whose permission to fight was awaited. The king forbade them to fight and summoned the leaders before him. There is a brilliant description of the embattled hosts. The two leaders are Wynnere and Wastoure, who accuse each other before the king of having caused the distress of the kingdom. The end of the poem is missing. Both poems are of considerable power and interest in themselves, and are even more significant as suggesting, what is often forgotten, that the fourteenth century was a period of great and wide-spread intellectual activity, and that poetical ability was not rare.

Not in the metre of *Piers the Plowman*, but none the less significant of the powerful hold which the figure of the Plowman obtained upon the English people, are the doggerel letters of the insurgents of 1381, given by Walsingham and Knighton, and reprinted by Maurice and Trevelyan. Trevelyan makes a suggestion which has doubtless occurred independently to many others, that '*Piers Plowman* may perhaps be only one characteristic fragment of a medieval folk-lore of allegory, which expressed for generations the faith and aspirations of the English peasant, but of which Langland's great poem alone has survived.' One would like to believe this; but the mention of 'do well and better' in the same letter with *Piers Plowman* makes it practically certain that the writer had in mind the poems known to us and not merely a traditional allegory; though it may well be that *Piers the Plowman* belonged to ancient popular tradition.

Next in order of time was, doubtless, the remarkable poem called *Peres the Ploughmans Crede*, which Skeat assigns to 'not

long after the latter part of 1393.' The versification is imitated from *Piers the Plowman*, and the theme, as well as the title, was clearly suggested by it. It is, however, not a vision, but an account of the author's search for some one to teach him his creed. He visits each of the orders of friars. Each abuses the rest and praises his own order, urging the inquirer to contribute to it and trouble himself no more about his creed. But he sees too much of their worldliness and wickedness, and refuses. At last, he meets a plain, honest ploughman, who delivers a long and bitter attack upon friars of all orders, and, finally, teaches the inquirer the much desired creed. The poem is notable, not only for the vigour of its satire, but also for the author's remarkable power of description.

With the *Crede* is often associated the long poem known as *The Ploughman's Tale*. This was first printed, in 1542 or 1535, in Chaucer's works and assigned to the Ploughman. That it was not written by Chaucer has long been known, but, until recently, it has been supposed to be by the author of the *Crede*. The poem, though containing much alliteration, is not in alliterative verse, but in rimed stanzas, and is entirely different in style from the *Crede*. The differences are such as indicate that it could not have been written by the author of that poem. It has recently been proved by Henry Bradley, that very considerable parts of the poem, including practically all the imitations of the *Crede*, were written in the sixteenth century. These passages were also independently recognised as interpolations by York Powell and this was communicated privately to Skeat, who now accepts Bradley's conclusions. Bradley thinks that the poem may contain some genuine stanzas of a Lollard poem of the fourteenth century, but that it underwent two successive expansions in the sixteenth century, both with the object of adapting it to contemporary controversy. The relation of even the fourteenth century portion to *Piers the Plowman* is very remote.

Three pieces belonging to the Wyclifite controversy, which also bear a more or less remote relation to *Piers the Plowman*, are ascribed by their editor, Thomas Wright, to 1401, and by Skeat, who re-edited the first of them, to 1402. The first of them, called *Jacke Upland*, is a violent attack upon the friars by one of the Wyclifite party. By John Bale, who rejected as wrong the attribution of it to Chaucer, it is, with equal absurdity, attributed to Wyclif himself. There is some alliteration in the piece, which made Wright suppose it to have been originally written in

alliterative verse. Skeat denies that it was ever intended as verse, and he seems to be right in this, though his repudiation of Wright's suggestion that our copy of the piece is corrupt is hardly borne out by the evidence. The second piece, *The Reply of Friar Daw Thopias*, is a vigorous and rather skilful answer to *Jacke Upland*. The author, himself a friar, is not content to remain on the defensive, but tries to shift the issue by attacking the Lollards. According to the *explicit* of the MS the author was John Walsingham, who is stated by Bale to have been a Carmelite. This piece is in very rude alliterative verse. *The Rejoinder of Jacke Upland*, which is preserved in the same MS with the *Reply*, is of the same general character as *Jacke Upland*, though, perhaps through the influence of the *Reply*, it contains a good deal more alliteration. None of these pieces has any poetical merit, but all are vigorous and interesting examples of the popular religious controversy of the day.

Very evidently due to the influence of *Piers the Plowman* is a short alliterative poem of 144 lines, addressed, apparently, to Henry V in 1415, and called by Skeat, its editor, *The Crowned King*. In a vision the author looks down into a deep dale, where he sees a multitude of people and hears a crowned king ask his commons for a subsidy for his wars; to the king a clerk kneels, and, having obtained leave to speak, urges him to cherish his people and beware of evil counsellors and of avarice. The piece is sensible and well written, but is entirely lacking in special poetical quality.

Of entirely uncertain date is an interesting allegorical poem called *Death and Liffe*, preserved in the Percy Folio MS. Its relation to *Piers the Plowman* is obvious and unmistakable. In a vision, closely modelled on the vision of the prologue, the poet witnesses a strife between the lovely lady Dame Life and the foul freke Dame Death, which was clearly suggested by the 'Vita de Do-best' of *Piers the Plowman*. In spite of its large indebtedness to the earlier poem, it is a work of no little originality and power.

In the same priceless MS is preserved another alliterative poem, which Skeat regards as the work of the author of *Death and Liffe*. It is called *The Scottish Feilde* and is, in the main, an account of the battle of Flodden. The author, who describes himself as 'a gentleman, by Jesu' who had his 'bidding place' 'at Bagily' (*i.e.* at Baggily Hall, Cheshire), was an ardent adherent of the Stanleys and wrote for the specific purpose of

celebrating their glorious exploits at Bosworth Field and at Flodden. The poem seems to have been written shortly after Flodden, and, perhaps, rewritten or revised later. That the author of this poem, spirited chronicle though it be, was capable of the excellences of *Death and Liſſe*, is hard to believe; the resemblances between the poems seem entirely superficial and due to the fact that they had a common model.

The influence of *Piers the Plowman* lasted, as we have seen, well into the sixteenth century; indeed, interest in both the poem and its central figure was greatly quickened by the supposed relations between it and Wyclifism. The name or the figure of the Ploughman appears in innumerable poems and prose writings, and allusions of all sorts are very common. Skeat has given a list of the most important of these in the fourth volume of his edition of *Piers Plowman* for the Early English Text Society.

We are accustomed to regard the fourteenth century as, on the whole, a dark epoch in the history of England—an epoch when the corruptions and injustices and ignorance of the Middle Ages were piling themselves ever higher and higher; when the Black Death, having devoured half the population of city and hamlet, was still hovering visibly like a gaunt and terrible vulture over the affrighted country; when noblemen and gentry heard in indignant bewilderment the sullen murmur of peasants awakening into consciousness through pain, with now and then a shriller cry for vengeance and a sort of blind justice; an epoch when intellectual life was dead or dying, not only in the universities, but throughout the land. Against this dark background we seemed to see only two bright figures, that of Chaucer, strangely kindled to radiance by momentary contact with the renaissance, and that of Wyclif, no less strange and solitary, striving to light the torch of reformation, which, hastily muffled by those in authority, smouldered and sparkled fitfully a hundred years before it burst into blaze. With them, but farther in the background, scarcely distinguishable, indeed, from the dark figures among which he moved, was dimly discerned a gaunt dreamer, clothed in the dull grey russet of a poor shepherd, now watching with lustreless but seeing eye the follies and corruptions and oppressions of the great city, now driven into the wilderness by the passionate protests of his aching heart, but ever shaping into crude, formless but powerful visions images of the wrongs and oppressions which he hated and of the growing hope which, from time to time, was revealed to his eager eyes.

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That the Black Death was a horrible reality the statistics of its ravages prove only too well; that there was injustice and misery, ignorance and intellectual and spiritual darkness, is only too true; but the more intimately we learn to know the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the more clearly do we see, not only Grosseteste and Ockham and Richard of Armagh, but a host of forgotten or nameless men who battled for justice, and kindness, and intellectual and spiritual light; and our study of the *Piers the Plowman* cluster of poems has shown us that that confused voice and that mighty vision were the voice and vision, not of one lonely, despised wanderer, but of many men, who, though of diverse tempers and gifts, cherished the same enthusiasm for righteousness and hate for evil.







# The Piers Plowman Controversy

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# The Piers Plowman Controversy

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THE WORK OF ONE OR OF FIVE

DR. J. J. JUSSERAND'S FIRST REPLY TO PROF. MANLY.

From *Modern Philology*, January 1909, p. 1-59.

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No. 139 *c*. PROFESSOR J. M. MANLY'S  
ANSWER TO DR. J. J. JUSSERAND.

From *Modern Philology*, June 1909 (p. 3-144), p. 1-62.

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No. 139 *d*. DR. JUSSERAND'S  
SECOND REPLY TO PROF. MANLY.

From *Modern Philology*, January 1910 (p. 189-326), p. 1-38.

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No. 139 *e*. THE AUTHORSHIP OF PIERS PLOWMAN

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## FOREWORDS

THE exceptional importance of Prof. Manly's challenge to the traditional authorship of *Piers Plowman*,—growing, as it did, out of the E. E. Text Soc.'s fine edition of the three Versions of the Poem by Prof. Skeat,—justified the *Extra Issue* of No. 135 *b* in the Original Series, the Offprint of Prof. Manly's Chapter on "*Piers the Plowman and its Sequence*" from vol. ii of *The Cambridge History of English Literature*—with the Forewords prefixt to it, by Prof. Manly, Dr. Hy. Bradley and myself. But Dr. J. J. Jusserand, whose excellent works on *Piers Plowman* and on English Literature are so well known, refused to accept the conclusions of Prof. Manly, Dr. Henry Bradley and me, and made a spirited and brilliant attack on them in *Modern Philology*. This, Prof. Manly answered, and Dr. Jusserand replied to his Answer.

Meantime Mr. R. W. Chambers and Mr. J. G. H. Grattan had been collating all the MSS. of the A Text of the Poem, and had found that a new edition of it was absolutely necessary to settle what the genuine A Text was; and they will shortly issue Part I of their work, for the E. E. T. S., with the full concurrence of Prof. Skeat. Mr. Chambers had also convinced himself that Prof. Manly's view was erroneous; and that the 3 Texts, A, B, and C, of *Piers Plowman* were the work of one and the same man, according to tradition. He published his Article in *The Modern Language Review* for January 1910; and he and the Editors of that Journal have kindly let us have Offprints of it, though the Pitt Press has sadly pared them down.

The Editor of *Modern Philology* and Prof. Manly and Dr.

## FOREWORDS

Jusserand have also allowed us to have Offprints of their Papers; and the two latter scholars have generously borne the cost of them respectively.

Dr. Hy. Bradley's short Answer to Mr. Chambers will, I hope, be offprinted soon from *The Modern Language Review*, and sent to our Members. The *Piers Plowman* Controversy will, no doubt, be a long one.

F. J. FURNIVALL.

3, St. George's Sq., N.W.,  
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## PIERS PLOWMAN

THE WORK OF ONE OR OF FIVE

### I

Next to the *Canterbury Tales*, the poem usually called *Piers Plowman* is the greatest literary work produced by England during the Middle Ages; and it was considered so from the first, these two poems being almost equally popular. Fifty-seven manuscripts have preserved for us Chaucer's tales; forty-five *Piers Plowman*. This latter work is a unique monument, much more singular and apart from anything else than Chaucer's masterpiece. It is more thoroughly English; of foreign influences on it there are but the faintest traces. Allegorical as it is, it gives us an image of English life in the fourteenth century of unsurpassed vividness. If we had only Chaucer we should know much less; Chaucer is at his best when describing individuals; his portraits are priceless. The author of *Piers Plowman* concerns himself especially with classes of men, great political movements, the general aspirations of the people, the improvements necessary in each class for the welfare of the nation. Contemporary events and the lessons to be deduced from them, the hopes, anxieties, problems, and sufferings occupying his compatriots' minds, are never far from his thoughts: plague, storms, French wars, question of labor and wages, bishops becoming royal functionaries, power of the Commons and the king, duties of the nobles, the priests, the workmen. He does not describe

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them simply to add picturesque touches, but to express what he feels, and show how the nation should be governed and be morally improved. He is not above his time, but of it; he is not a citizen of the world, but a thoroughgoing Englishman, and nothing else. Alone in Europe, and, what is more remarkable, alone in his country, he gives us a true impression of the grandeur of the internal reform that had been going on in England during the century: the establishment on a firm basis of that institution, unique then, and destined to be imitated throughout the world, in both hemispheres five hundred years later, the Westminster Parliament. The equivalent of such a line as the following one on the power of king, nobles, and Commons:

Knyghthood hym ladde,  
Might of the comunes · made hym to regne,<sup>†</sup>

can be found nowhere in the whole range of mediæval literature; it has but one real equivalent (inaccessible then to the public), the Rolls of Parliament.

No one came in any way near this writer; less than any, the great man who, from the window of his chamber in Aldgate tower, cast such a friendly look on the world, such a true citizen of it that, although he had taken part in the French wars, one could, but for the language, read his whole works without guessing on which side he had fought. Himself a member of Parliament, he who described so many men of so many sorts, has not left in the whole series of his works a line, a word, allowing his readers to suspect the magnitude of the change England was undergoing; even Froissart gives a better idea of it than he does. His franklin he describes as having been "ful ofte tyme" a "knight of the schire," and instead of something on the part he may have played then, we simply get thereupon the information that

An anlas and a gipser al of silk  
Heng at his gerdul, whit as morne mylk.

Neither of these two great authors is entirely lacking in the qualities of the other; but reading Chaucer, we know better what England looked like; reading *Piers Plowman*, we know better what she felt, suffered from, and longed for.

<sup>†</sup> B, ProL. 112.

Deeply concerned with the grave problems confronting his countrymen, the author of *Piers Plowman* seems to have been one of those writers, not a unique case in literature, whose life and book develop together, the one reflecting necessarily the change that years and circumstances may have worked in the other. The life and the book of such men as Montaigne, Rabelais, Tasso, Cervantes, especially the two former, may be quoted as offering parallelisms of the same order.

The *Piers Plowman* visions, made up of a mixture of vague allegories and intensely vivid realities, deal with three principal episodes, the main lines of which the author seems to have had in his mind from the first, the episode of Meed, the episode of Piers Plowman, and the search for Dowel, Dobet, Dobest. Piers Plowman reappears in the last episode; he is the most important and characteristic personage in the work, hence its title. The author, who, like Montaigne for his essays, seems to have been constantly rewriting his poem, gave, as is well known, three principal versions of it, which can be dated from the historical allusions in them: A, 1362-63; B, 1376-77; C, 1398-99.

When a man takes, so to say, for his life's companion and confidant, a work of his, adding new parts or new thoughts as years pass on, and as events put their impress on his mind, the way in which these remakings are carried on is ever the same: circumstances command them. The author has before him a copy of his first and shortest text, and he makes here and there, as it occurs to him, an emendation, alters a word or a passage which he thinks he can improve, or which no longer corresponds to his way of thinking; he corrects mistakes, and occasionally forgets to correct them; he develops an idea, adds examples and quotations, and sometimes new passages, clashing with others written years before which he forgets to erase; writes a continuation, a new book, a new part. The emendations or additions in the already-written text are crammed into the margin, or written on slips or fly-leaves. That this practice was in use in the Middle Ages, we might have surmised, as it is difficult to imagine any other; but we know in fact that it was so, as some few samples of manuscripts of this sort have come down to us; manuscripts in which "the author has made corrections,

additions, or suppressions, between the lines, on the margins, and sometimes on separate sheets or fragments of vellum inserted in the quire. It is not always easy to see where those modifications should come in." <sup>1</sup>

Great care has been, indeed, ever necessary to prevent mistakes in such cases; they have, in fact, scarcely ever been avoided. Glaring ones remain in works of this sort, of whatever epoch, and which we know to have been revised sometimes by the authors themselves, sometimes by their trustiest friends after their death, and at periods, too, when more attention was paid to correct texts and logical development than in the days of the Plantagenets.

A famous example of this way of rewriting a book is that of Montaigne, whose copy of his own essays, prepared in view of one last edition, is preserved at Bordeaux, the margins covered with scribbled additions,<sup>2</sup> other additions having certainly been inscribed on slips or fly-leaves (now lost), as they are to be found, not always at their proper place, in the undoubtedly authentic text published soon after Montaigne's death by those devoted friends and admirers of his, Pierre de Brach and Mlle de Gournay.

Superabundant proofs may be given that the author of *Piers Plowman* wrote his revisions in a similar way, handing, however, to less careful people (professional scribes) material requiring more care, with some slips, fly-leaves, afterthoughts, and marginal additions difficult to place at the proper spot. An original with all the leaves, sheets, and slips in good order, or comparatively so, would yield comparatively good copies; then, by some accident, leaves and slips would get mixed, and scribes would reproduce with perfect composure this jumble of incoherent patches, thus betraying the loose and scrappy state of the text before them, and their own obtuseness.<sup>3</sup> Tentative additions, written by the author on the

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Mr. Léopold Delisle to the author, Chantilly, August 3, 1903. An example of a MS with alterations in the primitive text effected by means of slips of vellum pasted on certain passages, is the MS Royal 14, c, vii, in the British Museum, containing the *Historia Anglorum* of Matthew Paris.

<sup>2</sup> A facsimile page accompanies P. Bonnefon's contribution to the *Histoire de la littérature française* of P. de Julleville, Vol. III, p. 466.

<sup>3</sup> A striking example is that offered by two important MSS of A, one at University College, Oxford, and the Rawlinson Poet. 137, at the Bodleian. Both were copied from the same original which offered a good text, but the leaves or slips wherewith it was made had got disarranged and had been put together in wrong order. Both scribes carefully

margin or on scraps, to be later definitively admitted or not into the text, were inserted haphazard anywhere by some copyists and let alone by others.<sup>1</sup> In his next revision the poet never failed to remove a number of errors left in the previous text, always, however, forgetting a few.

As shown by the condition of MSS, the poet let copyists transcribe his work at various moments, when it was in the making (it was indeed ever in the making), and was in a far from complete and perfect state; sometimes when part or the whole of an episode was lacking, or when it ended with a canto or passus merely sketched and left unfinished.<sup>2</sup> The scribes who copied the MS Harl. 875 and the Lincoln's Inn MS had apparently before them an original of version A, containing only the first eight passus, that is, the episodes of Meed and Piers. Almost all the other MSS of A have eleven passus, and contain the story of Meed, Piers, and

reproduced the same jumble of incoherent parts. The University College MS "is regular down to passus II, 25, which is immediately followed (on the same page) by passus VII, 71-213, and then returns to l. 132 of passus I, the last four lines of passus I and some twenty lines of passus II occurring twice over. It then goes down to passus VII, 70, when the passage which had already occurred is omitted." In the other MS: "the text is in precisely the same wrong order," says Skeat in the Preface of A, pp. xx and 143\* (Early Engl. Text Soc.). Other examples might be quoted. In the MS Cotton, Vespasian B, XVI, in the British Museum, containing a text of C, "written before 1400," and therefore contemporary with the author, passus XVIII was copied from separate sheets or scraps which had also got mixed, so that after XVIII, 186, comes XVIII, 288, "then comes XVIII, 187; then XVIII, 259-287; then XVIII, 188-258, after which comes XVIII, 289, and all the rest of the passus."—Skeat, Preface of C, p. xl.

<sup>1</sup> Of this sort are, to all appearances, the additional lines in the MS Harl. 875 of A, not to be found elsewhere, especially the two passages giving, as in a parenthesis, some supplementary touches, on Fals and on Favel, one of four and the other of three lines (II, 136, 141). In the MS of C, belonging to the Earl of Ilchester, a passage (X, 75-281, Skeat, Preface of C, p. xxxiv) is twice repeated with considerable differences, one of the two versions being, it seems, a first cast of the other. Finding both in the copy before him, the scribe quietly transcribed the two.

Another remarkable example is the one to which Professor Manly drew attention: The four or five lines added at the moment when Piers Plowman is about to make his will, and giving the names of his wife and children (A, VII, 70). They had obviously been written apart on the margin or on a slip, to be inserted later and be duly connected with the bulk of the text. The copyists inserted them as they were, at the place opposite which they found them, and so they form a crude and strange parenthesis. The scribes wrote them, however, precisely as a sort of parenthesis, which was showing more intelligence than in some other cases; the sign indicating a new paragraph usually precedes them; such is the case in the excellent MS Laud 581, fol. 27. The additional MS 35, 287, fol. 29<sup>b</sup>, not only has the same sign, but a blank precedes these lines, so as to show that they are really something apart.

<sup>2</sup> MS Rawlinson Poet. 38, in the Bodleian, is, as Mr. Skeat has pointed out (preface of B, p. xii, E. E. T. S.), a copy of the B text with some additions and afterthoughts (about one hundred and sixty lines in all), destined to be incorporated later, with a large quantity of others, in the C text. It represents, therefore, one more state in which the work was allowed by the author to be copied. It seems scarcely probable that an independent reviser should have revised so little and allowed the work to be copied after such slight changes.

part of Dowel. Two, however, give us a fragment; and a third, what purports to be the whole of a twelfth passus,<sup>1</sup> a mere sketch anyhow, almost entirely discarded in subsequent revisions. It does not in any case end the story of Dowel; much less does it give what the beginning of the episode had led us to expect concerning Dobet and Dobest. Of these two we were to hear only in the B and C texts, written later, which were also allowed to be copied before they were finished; they were, indeed, never finished at all. Both contain, besides the Meed and the Plowman episodes, seven passus on Dowel, four on Dobet, and only two on Dobest. That the author did not intend to end there is shown, not only because it does not really end (in allegorical matters, it is true, one may end almost anywhere), not only on account of the abnormal brevity of the Dobest part, but also because, in the Bodleian MS Laud 656 of the C text, one of the best and most trustworthy, after the conclusion of the second and last *de facto* passus on Dobest, occur the words: "Explicit passus secundus de dobest et incipit passus tercius." These words do not seem to have been added, as Mr. Skeat suggests, by mistake, but because the copyist read them in his original. That a continuation was really expected is shown by the blank pages left for it: the leaf on which this note appears, as well as the three following ones (somewhat damaged by somebody who wanted bits of vellum and cut off some strips), remain blank in the MS, and these leaves belong, as I have recently verified, to the quire on which the Visions are written, not to the work coming next in the volume.

Works of the *Piers Plowman* type are rarely finished. The life of men who take their book for their confidant comes to an end before their book does. The English dreamer no more finished his *Piers Plowman* than Montaigne his *Essays*, or Rabelais his *Gargantua*. But while the author allowed incomplete texts to go about, there is no doubt that each successive episode was in

<sup>1</sup> The MS of version A at University College, Oxford, has 13 lines of this twelfth passus; the Ingilby MS has 88 lines and there stops short, the state of the MS showing, according to Skeat (*Parallel Extracts of 45 MSS*; Early Engl. Text Soc., p. 29), that the scribe had no more to copy. The MS Rawlinson Poet. 137, at the Bodleian, contains what purports to be the whole passus, but as, in this case also, the original MS did not supply a complete text, a man called John But, of whom more hereafter (p. 12), took upon himself to add to it a sensational ending of his invention.

his mind when he laid down his pen after having finished the foregoing one, which shows sameness and continuity of purpose. For the two first, Meed and Piers, though more loosely connected than the rest, there can be no doubt, as they were written together in the same mood and style, and made public together; there is no copy where they appear separate. For the last episode, a tripartite one, dealing with Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest, the connection with the previous ones is established by the last part of the last passus (VIII) concerning Piers, where the author represents himself pondering about Dowel and the necessity of securing his help: pardons, Pope's bulls, triennials will be no good, "bote Dowel the helpe;" may we so behave, "er we gon hennes," that we may claim then, "we duden as he (Dowel) us hiȝte."<sup>1</sup> That the Dowel episode would come next, if anything came, is thus made obvious; that it would be a tripartite one is shown from the beginning of this new part: (1) MSS of the A text have there such a heading as, "Incipit hic Dowel, Dobet, et Dobest," making clear what was the ultimate purpose of the author, though as a matter of fact Dowel alone, and only in part, was yet written; (2) The text itself of the first passus concerning Dowel also forecasts the treble account which was to be given only years later, in versions B and C, but was, even so early as 1362, in the author's mind. In the very first passus concerning Dowel (ninth of the whole work) Thought calls the dreamer's attention to those three beings, those three steps toward perfection:

"Dowel," quod he, "and Dobet · and Dobest þe þridde  
Beop þreo faire vertues · and beop not fer to fynde."<sup>2</sup>

That these three versions of the *Piers Plowman* poem exist is certain; that they were written by someone cannot be considered a rash surmise. Of that one we know little; but that little is considerably better than nothing; better than in the case of more than one mediæval work of value, *Morte d'Arthur*, for example, *Garwayne and the Green Knight*, or *Pearl*, in which cases we are reduced to mere suppositions.

For *Piers Plowman*, we have what the manuscripts tell us in their titles, colophons, or marginal notes; what the author tells us

<sup>1</sup> A, VIII, 187.

<sup>2</sup> A, IX, 69.

himself in his verses; and what tradition has to say, being represented by one man at least, whose testimony is of real weight.

Without exception, all those titles, colophons, marginal notes, and testimonies agree in pointing to the succession of visions, forming, at first, 8 or 12, and lastly 23 passus, as being one work, having for its general title *Piers Plowman*, and written by one author. MSS containing the three episodes of Meed, *Piers Plowman* properly so called, and Dowel, begin thus: "Hic incipit liber qui vocatur pers plowman;"<sup>1</sup> and end thus: "Explicit tractatus de perys plowman."<sup>2</sup> The continuity of the work is also shown by the numeration of the passus in several MSS; the MS Add. 35,287, for example, of text B, where we are told, at the end of the *Piers Plowman* episode, that the new passus now beginning is, at the same time, the first of Dowel and the eighth of the total work;<sup>3</sup> when we have had not only Dowel, but Dobet and Dobest, occurs then the colophon: "Explicit hic Dialogus petri plowman." The excellent MS Laud 581, also of text B, at the Bodleian, has the same way of counting the passus: "Passus octavus de visione et primus de dowel. . . . Passus xvj<sup>us</sup>, et primus de dobet."<sup>4</sup>

The manuscripts thus connect together the several parts of the poem, showing that one whole work, under the general title of *Piers Plowman*, is in question. In the same fashion, all the notes found on their leaves, the allusion in the work, and tradition, attribute the poem to one single author.

Some of these notes vary as to the name or the form of the name or surname; not one implies more than one author for the whole. At the end of the *Piers Plowman* episode properly so called, three MSS have the note: "Explicit visio Willelmi W. de petro Plowman. Et hic incipit visio *ejusdem* de Dowel."<sup>5</sup> Three MSS assert therefore, in express fashion, that Dowel and the rest are by the same author. The more probable name and surname

<sup>1</sup> MS Rawlinson Poet. 137, in the Bodleian, a text of A, the only one with John But's addition, dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> MS Harl. 3954, ab. 1420 (Skeat), containing 11 passus, and being a mixture of the A and B versions.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 36. This MS, now in the British Museum, was formerly the MS Ashburnham CXXIX.

<sup>4</sup> Fol. 33a and 62a; same colophon: "Explicit hic dialogus petri plowman."

<sup>5</sup> (1) An early MS belonging to the Earl of Ilchester; (2) the MS Douce 104, in the Bodleian Library, dated 1427; (3) the MS Digby 102, same library, middle of fifteenth



for our author are William Langland (or Longlond). The name William occurs in a number of places and cannot be doubted: "Incipit visio Willelmi . . . . Explicit visio Willelmi. . . . A lovely lady calde me by name—And seide, 'Wille, slepest thou?' . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

"What art thou?" quath ich · "that my name knowest?"

"That wost thou, Wille," quath he · "and no wight betere." <sup>2</sup>

The surname Langland (Longlond) is to be found in full in a punning line of the B text, the syllables being arranged in a reversed order:

I have lyved in *londe*, quod I · My name is *longe Wille*. <sup>3</sup>

If we discarded the punning intention, the line would have little enough meaning: to "live in land" does not convey any very clear idea; so little indeed, that when revising his text for the third time, and choosing not to repeat his confidence, the author not only suppressed the "longe Wille," but also the "lived in londe," which left alone would have, to be sure, betrayed nothing, but would have been simply meaningless. He wrote:

Ich have lived in London · meny long 3eres. <sup>4</sup>

That the line was of interest as giving the author's name was not noticed only by the critics of to-day; it drew attention from the first. In the margin of the MS Laud 581, opposite the before-

century, all three containing the C text. See Skeat's edition (E.E.T.S.) of C, pp. xxxvii, xlv, xlvi. The word represented by an initial (W.), an abbreviation habitually recalling the place of birth or origin, has been hypothetically, and with no certitude, interpreted as meaning "Wigorniensis" (Skeat), or "of-Wychwood" (Pearson).

<sup>1</sup> C, II, 5.

<sup>2</sup> C, XI, 71.

<sup>3</sup> B, XV, 148.

<sup>4</sup> C, XVII, 286. To give one's name, or someone else's, in a more or less enigmatical fashion was quite customary in Langland's day. Mr. Skeat has been the first to show that when he spoke of the "wikked Nest" (*Monk's Tale*), Chaucer meant Oliver de Mauni, whose name he simply translated. I have quoted the example of Christine de Pisan in my *Piers Plowman*. Another example is Gower who wrote:

Primos sume pedes Godefredi desque Johanni,  
Principiumque sui Wallia jungat eis  
Ter caput amittens det cetera membra.

—*Fox Clamantis*, Prol. to Book I.

Langland seems to have considered that some inconvenience might result from his having said so much, and he suppressed in text C, as said above, his veiled confidence.

quoted verse, occur the words in fifteenth-century handwriting: "Nota the name of thauct[our]." <sup>1</sup> The carefully written MS Additional 35,287, which has been revised by a contemporary corrector, supplies very important evidence. The rule followed in it is that Latin words or names of real personages are written in large letters and underlined in red, and the names of imaginary beings are not distinguished in any way from the rest of the text. Thus the names of Meed, Holy Church, Robert the Robber, etc., are written like any other word. But the names of Samson, Samuel, Seneca, Kings Edmund and Edward are underlined in red. The name of "Longe Wille" is underlined in red and written in larger letters than the rest of the line, thus taking rank in those of real and not of imaginary beings.

Various notes and more or less detailed statements inscribed on several MSS are to the same effect. In the MS Ashburnham CXXX appear, inside the cover, in a handwriting of the fifteenth century, the words, "Robert or William Langland made pers ploughman." <sup>2</sup> In the Dublin MS occurs the well-known statement, also written in the fifteenth century: "Memorandum quod Stacy de Rokayle, pater Willielmi de Langlond . . . qui prædictus Willielmus fecit librum qui vocatur Perys Ploughman." John Bale, later, who took so much trouble, in the course of his "labor-youse journeys," to gather all available information concerning old English writers, inserted in his *Catalogue* a somewhat detailed notice which, if it contains some doubtful assertions (he himself states that several points are indeed doubtful), is certainly the result of personal investigations. He asserts once more that *Piers Plowman* is the work of one poet, called "Langland." Not content with printing his statement in his Latin *Catalogue*, he repeated it, in an abbreviated form, on the cover of one of the MSS he handled, namely the before-quoted Ashburnham MS CXXX of the B text: "Robertus Langlande, natus in comitatu Salopie in villa Mortimeris Clybery in the Clayland and within viij miles of Malvern hills, scripsit piers ploughman." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 64a.

<sup>2</sup> Skeat, B, Preface, p. xxii (E. E. T. S.).

<sup>3</sup> Skeat, A, Preface, p. xxxv (E. E. T. S.).

Unity of the work, condition of the MSS, allusions in the text or out of it, marginal notes, tradition concerning both work and author agree well together. From the first, the poem has been held to consist of a succession of visions forming one single poem, as the *Canterbury Tales*, composed of a succession of tales, are only one work; and to have been written by one single author, called William or Robert (in fact certainly William) Langland. An attempt has recently been made to upset all that has been accepted thereon up to now.

## II

During the last few years, Professor Manly has devoted his time and thoughts to *Piers Plowman*, not without notable effect. In two essays of great value he has made known the result of his studies and the inferences he thinks he can draw from what he has discovered.

His main and most interesting discovery, one which entitles him to the gratitude of every lover of mediæval literature, consists in his having pointed out that a passage in two of the versions had been misplaced in every MS and consequently in every edition of the same, making nonsense where it was, while it would make sense elsewhere. Scribes, correctors, readers, editors, printers, and critics innumerable had seen the passage for five hundred years without noticing anything strange about it. Mr. Manly saw what nobody had seen, and the moment he spoke everybody agreed with him. Even if, in the end, the theories he thereupon put forth are not admitted, his merit will ever be that of the inventor; that of others, at best, the merit of the improver. There are several sorts of discoverers; Professor Manly belongs to the best and rarest, being one of those whose courtesy equals their learning and dialectical cleverness.

The discovery and theories of Professor Manly form the subject of two essays by him, one in *Modern Philology*, January, 1906, called "The Lost Leaf of Piers the Plowman," the other being the chapter on "Piers the Plowman and Its Sequence," in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. II, 1908.

Combining what he had discovered with the impressions derived

from a careful reading of the three texts in succession, he came to the conclusion that *Piers Plowman* "is really the work of five different men," to the critics' imagination being due "the creation of a mythical author of all these poems."<sup>1</sup>

It may be, I think, in the interest of all to get rid at once of one of these five, and reduce the number to four. Even so reduced Professor Manly's theory, as will be seen, will prove hard enough to sustain. To admit John But to the honor of being one of the authors of the poem is indeed going too far. At the time when Richard II was "kyng of jis rewme," a copy of version A came to the hands of a silly scribbler who, as he says, "meddled of makyng." Finding the poem unfinished, and unaware of much more having been composed and made public since (for version B, at least, was then in existence), he added a senseless ending of his own, volunteering the information that Death had killed the author, now "closed under clom." He was so good as to give his name, so that we know for sure, on his own testimony, that "Johan But" was a fool.<sup>2</sup>

This spurious ending, preserved in only one MS and of which no trace is to be found in any of the continuations of the poem, no more entitles John But to the dignity of co-author, than do the lines added by scribes to make known their thirst, and their joy at having finished copying *Piers Plowman*:

Now of jis litel book y have makyd an ende,  
Goddis blessing mote he have pat drinke wil me sende.<sup>3</sup>

Let us therefore speak only of the four remaining authors, not an insignificant number, whose contribution to the total work is thus divided by Mr. Manly: Author I wrote passus I—VIII of A, containing the Meed and Piers Plowman episodes; Author II wrote the fragment on Dowel occurring in various MSS of A; to Author

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History*, II, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The passage on Death having killed the author seems to me, as to Professor Manly, to be the product of But's brain (so to speak). In his Oxford edition Mr. Skeat suppresses as spurious only the twelve last lines, from "And so bad Iohan But," etc., and in his E. E. T. S. edition he leaves a blank between these lines and the rest. As a matter of fact there is no blank in the MS, nor anything to distinguish these lines from what went before.

<sup>3</sup> MS Douce 323 (A text).

III are due the emendations and additions in text B; to Author IV the emendations and additions in text C.

Before studying the reasons alleged in support of this thesis, it may be observed that, to carry conviction, they must be very strong, not only because, as pointed out above, the spirit pervading *Piers Plowman* is not to be found anywhere else, and if four poets instead of one were imbued with it (the four being besides of great merit), it is singular that they all chose to manifest it by anonymous additions to the work of someone else, the same work in each case; not only because all testimonies and notes in the MSS contradict this theory; not only because, if the shadowy character of one author unseen, unmet by any contemporary, is strange, the same happening for four people concerned with the same problems would be a wonder; but also because to suppose four authors adding new parts to a poem and freely remodeling the old ones, is to suppose also that, as soon as Author I had finished writing, he would have died to leave room for Author II who, in his turn, must have written and died; as must have done Author III to make room for Author IV. If Author I, II, or III had survived, they would have protested against the intrusion; or, at least, one or several among them would have written a continuation of his own (the ever-unfinished poem certainly wanted one), so that if he had been unable to prevent interpolations or spurious continuations, he would have given his actual views. But we have no trace of such a thing. There are many manuscripts, yet they give us only one text for each continuation. This is the more remarkable as, if we admit of Professor Manly's own strictures, the intrusion of each successive author must have been very galling to the previous ones. Mr. Manly brings forth a number of proofs demonstrating, as he considers, that the work was actually spoilt in many places by these subsequent contributors, that Author II tried to imitate the style of Author I but failed; that Author III misunderstood, in a number of passages, the meaning of his fore-runners, making nonsense of them all, and that Author IV did the same with Author III. No explanation is indeed possible, except that each of these authors must have written and breathed his last, with absolute punctuality, as moths lay their eggs, gasp,

and die.<sup>1</sup> A very strange, not to say improbable case. What are the proofs?

They are of three different sorts: (1) The shuffled leaf or misplaced passage; (2) Authors III and IV did not understand what their forerunners meant and must, therefore, be different people; (3) the differences of moods, feelings, ways of speaking, literary merit, meter, and dialect are such between the different parts or successive revisions, as to denote four different authors.

The main effort of Mr. Manly bearing on the demonstration that the author of version B cannot be the same as the author or authors of version A, and his discovery concerning the shifted passage being one of his most striking arguments, we shall consider this question first.

### III

Having narrated, in the earliest version of the poem, the story of Meed, a story with no end to it, as is the case with all his stories, the author begins to tell his beads, and this, as a matter of course, he seems to imply, puts him to sleep:

And so I blaberde on my beodes · pat brouhte me a-slepe.<sup>2</sup>

He has a new vision, as slightly connected as can be with the foregoing one. Conscience delivers a sermon and Repentance advises sinners to repent. "William" himself repents first, dropping "watur with his e3en;" then "Pernel proud-herte" does the same. Beginning with Pernel, who represents Pride, we have then a confession of the Seven Deadly Sins, sometimes personified by real beings, sometimes remaining sheer abstractions. Some of the portraits are drawn with admirable care and vividness; others are mere sketches, so perfunctory and inadequate as to seem rather memoranda to be developed later, and put there simply for the name to appear in the list. "Lechour," for example, whose misdeeds the author at other places, in the same version, is not loath to describe in language no less crude than picturesque, gets

<sup>1</sup> It may also be observed that if it frequently occurs that an author leaves a work of his unfinished, the case is rarer with a continuator; it is usually in view of completing what is unfinished that a continuator sets to work. It took time and space for Jean de Meung to finish the *Roman de la Rose*, but he finished it.

<sup>2</sup> A, V, 8.

only five lines—a simple memorandum to be improved afterward ; as was indeed indispensable, for not only are details lacking, but the few that are given are scarcely appropriate. There is no confession at all ; Lechour asks mercy for his “misdeeds,” and promises that, for seven years, on Saturdays, he will have only one meal and will drink only water. If the privation he mentions is the only one he means to inflict on himself, it leaves him a margin for many sins, and especially his favorite one. Others, such as Envy (44 lines), Coveitise (39), and Gloton (76), are as full of life as the best passages in Chaucer himself.

Sloth, who comes last, has 14 lines, nearer the Lechour than the Gloton type ; he is sorry for his nondescript “sunnes,” and promises that, for seven years, he will not fail to hear mass and matins on Sundays, and no “ale after mete” will keep him from church in the evening, which, if admissible, is not strikingly fitting. This said, a continuation follows, the inappropriateness of which, after so many centuries, Mr. Manly was the first to point out.

Immediately after Sloth's solemn promise “to þe Rode,” which, in the usual course, should conclude his speech, come twenty-four utterly irrelevant lines : “And 3it,” Sloth is supposed to continue saying :

And 3it I-chulle 3elden a3eyn · 3if I so muche have  
Al þat I wickkedliche won · seþþe I wit hade, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The passage deals with the moral obligation for robbers and dishonest people to make restitution. A real being—such as others in the course of these confessions, like “Pernel proud-herte,” or Gloton—Robert the Robber, is then introduced, weeping for his sins, wanting to make restitution, and in despair because he has not the wherewithal. These 24 verses are certainly out of place ; some mistake of the scribe, to whom was due the original copy which all the others transcribed, must have caused the mischief, for all the MSS of A, without exception, offer this same unacceptable arrangement.

Here comes Mr. Manly's important deduction : this same unacceptable arrangement *was* accepted by the author of version B.

<sup>1</sup> A, V, 236.

He had certainly before him, when he set to work, a copy of A; and while he introduced in it innumerable alterations and additions, he left this passage at the same wrong place. He could never have failed to notice the mistake if he had really been the author of A; as he did not, he was not.

And there is more than that. The very way in which he tried to get out of difficulty shows that he was not the same man. He noticed that there was something unsatisfactory about the passage: what has Sloth to do with restitution? He also noticed the singular fact that, for some unexplained reason, in this confession of the Seven Deadly Sins, only six appear, Wrath being forgotten. What he did, thereupon, betrayed as much as anything else, according to Professor Manly, the dualism of authorship:

The omission of Wrath and the confusion as to Sloth were noticed by B, and he treated them rather ingeniously. He introduced into the earlier part of Sloth's confession a declaration that he had been so slothful as to withhold the wages of his servants and to forget to return things he had borrowed. To supply a confession of Wrath, he himself wrote a *Confessio Irae*, totally different in style from the work of A, and, indeed, more appropriate for Envy than for Wrath, containing as it does no very distinctive traits of Wrath.<sup>1</sup>

These assertions, which we shall take up one by one, are supplemented by an explanation of what, in the opinion of Professor Manly, must have taken place. According to him, the author of the first part of A, the best-gifted and cleverest of all, cannot have forgotten Wrath and must have devoted to it a leaf which was accidentally lost; the same author must have put the passage concerning Robert the Robber where it actually stands; but, between the beginning of this passage and the end of Sloth, must have occurred, on a leaf also lost, lines serving as a transition from Sloth to Robert, lines numerous enough "for the development of the confession of Robert . . . and also for the less abrupt ending of the confession of Sloth"<sup>2</sup>—an ending, it may be said, at once, not more abrupt than that of several of Sloth's fellow-sins. Very ingenious calculations, based on the average size of MSS and the number of lines in them, led Mr. Manly to the conclusion that those

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Philology*, Vol. III, p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.



two passages would correspond, and that the disappearance of one sheet in a quire of the original MS, that is, of the two half-sheets on which the two passages must have been written, is the proper explanation for the two gaps said to exist in the text.

This explanation seems to me absolutely untenable, and I entirely agree with Mr. Bradley, who has pointed out<sup>1</sup> that no conceivable lost passage with lines making a transition from Sloth to Robert the Robber could be at all satisfactory. Those two people cannot possibly be grouped together; the category to which Robert belongs is, without possible doubt, Coveitise, who like him is bound to make restitution, and the proper place for the misplaced 24 lines is after Coveitise: A, V, 145. Mr. Bradley adds that such a statement rather confirms than weakens Mr. Manly's theory as to the difference of authors; not only B did not notice that the 24 lines were at the wrong place, but he had not the slightest idea what the right one was.

All these observations can easily be answered.

The author of B, the same I think as the author of A, issued, after a dozen years or more, a new text of his poem, a text which he had had more or less constantly beside him, making changes, corrections, and additions as it occurred to him, the usual way with authors of works of this sort, capable of extension. The copy he used was naturally a copy of A, as there was no other text then in existence, with the 24 lines certainly at the wrong place, since he left them there. His changes, which transformed a poem of 2,579 lines into one of 7,241, were very numerous; sometimes slight ones were made, sometimes new quotations were added, sometimes new matter was introduced on a considerable scale: the very way another writer, Montaigne, also absorbed in his thoughts, actually worked. Preceded by some lines on the necessity of giving back ill-gotten goods ("And 3it I-chulle 3elden a3eyn," etc.), the passage on Robert the Robber, a logical sequence to Coveitise, forms a separate incident, not at all necessary to make the confession of the Deadly Sins complete; it has all the appearances of an afterthought; such afterthoughts as the author, or anyone in his place, would write on separate slips left loose or which might get

loose, and which Adam Scrivener of sleepy pen would copy anywhere. And as Scrivener, in the present case, did not know what to do, he put the stray lines at the end of the passus when the rest of the confessions were finished, so Robert would come just before the "pousent of men" who mourned for their sins, "weopyng and weylng."

For what concerns the author himself, maybe, while making so many changes in so many places, he never paid any attention to this passage (in which, as a matter of fact, he introduced no change at all<sup>1</sup>); maybe also he thought of transferring it to its proper place and neglected to mark it accordingly, or to see that the removal was made. The fact that the confession of Coveitise, as remodeled in version B, contains a passage, not in A, where restitution is insisted upon, at great length, in most pressing language, lends probability to this latter hypothesis. In version A the sins of this personage were told with some detail, but nothing except the vaguest allusion was made to necessary amends. In B, on the contrary, restitution is one of the points about which we hear most, the added passage being highly picturesque and in the author's best vein. Did you never make restitution? says Repentance—

"3us, ones I was herberwed," quod he · "with an hep of chapmen,  
I roos whan thei were arest · and yrifled here males."

"That was no restitucioun," quod Repentance · "but a robberes  
thefte . . . ."

"I wende ryflynge were restitucioun," quod he · "for I lerned nevere  
rede on boke,

And I can no Frenche in feith · but of the ferthest ende of Norfolk."

The restitution here alluded to is precisely that which a penitent thief should make, the question being of stolen goods. Much more clearly than the lines added in Sloth (the bearing of which

<sup>1</sup> Two lines, 248, 249, of A are omitted in B, a mere scribe's oversight and one, as Skeat has noticed (not at all in view of the present discussion), particularly difficult to avoid in copying alliterative verses. (Preface of A, 1867, p. xvi.)

<sup>2</sup> B, V, 232; and further on, Repentance reverts to the same subject:

"Thow art an unkynde creature · I can the nou3te assoile,  
Til thow make restitucioun · and rekne with hem alle,  
And sithen that resoun rolle it · in the regystre of hevене,  
That thow hast made uche man good · I may the nou3te assoile;  
*Non dimittitur peccatum · donec restituatur ablatum.*"—B, V, 276.

will presently be examined), this addition looks like a preparation for the appearance, shortly after, of Robert the Robber, who, too, should make restitution, but has "nouȝte wher-of."

That nevertheless, owing to the author's omission or the scrivener's "negligence and rape," as Chaucer would say, the Robert and Restitution passage was left, as before, at the wrong place, has nothing very prodigious or extraordinary. There is not even any need to suggest (though it may have been the case) that the poet happened to be of a conspicuously careless nature. The most careful people may be at times absent-minded. As I was talking recently about the *Piers Plowman* problem with a writer, who feels greatly interested in it (as well as in a few other questions), whose works have had a wide circulation and have been scrutinized by critics, not all of them over-friendly, he mentioned that something of the sort had happened to himself. Opening, thereupon, at p. 13, the *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, a work made up of several essays, written at different moments, with additions and afterthoughts noted on slips, he pointed out that two slips with the same statement had not only been allowed in by him, but the contents of the two were repeated in the same page, giving to the whole a, to say the least, somewhat ludicrous appearance :

The bobcats are very fond of prairie dogs, and haunt the dog towns as soon as spring comes and the inhabitants emerge from their hibernation. . . .

Bobcats are very fond of lurking round prairie-dog towns as soon as the prairie dogs come out in spring. . . .

Not only critics, friendly or otherwise, never noticed this strange occurrence, but the author himself read three proofs of the work, gave several editions of it, and has only just now had the mistake removed.

Stray sheets with corrections and afterthoughts on them are certainly difficult to handle, and require a perseverance in attention which, without speaking of scribes, famous authors sometimes lack. To give only one more example, I may quote that of Cervantes who, as everyone knows, represents Sancho Panza quietly mounting his ass just after Gines de Pasamonte had stolen it from him. The theft was an afterthought that Cervantes

forgot to make fit properly with the rest of his work. Having become aware of the mistake, he nevertheless allowed two passages to subsist in his text, in which Sancho is shown still riding the stolen animal. He made fun of it all later, in chaps. iii and iv of the second part of his immortal book; being no less merry about his mishap than the President of the United States about his own.

The same happened to Langland who, even supposing him to exhibit no conspicuous carelessness, was certainly not endowed with a strictly geometrical mind, and who, judging from results, continued to the last using slips, and loose sheets that were apt to go astray. Another proof, unnoticed till now, may be given from the C version. In this text the author has added, among other passages, some ten lines in the speech delivered by Piers Plowman before he makes his will :

Consaile nat the comune · the Kyng to displease ;<sup>1</sup>

and do not, "my dere sone," hamper parliamentary, judicial, or municipal authorities in the fulfilling of their duties. These lines occur in C, after the text of the parenthesis giving us the name of Piers's wife and children; they make no proper continuation, neither to this nor to what Piers was saying before, for he was saying that he would help all, except "Jack þe Jogelour" and "folke of that ordre." What "dere sone" is he now addressing? The passage thus inserted is so unsatisfactory that Mr. Skeat's marginal analysis ceases there,<sup>2</sup> as it is difficult indeed to make anything of it.

But the whole can easily be set right. In an earlier part of his same speech, Piers had been addressing especially the Knight, a good knight, full of the best will; he had recommended him to behave well, and to avoid dissolute people. To this advice in A and B, he added in C one line, as a link for his afterthought, viz., the line reading :

Contreplede nat conscience · ne holy kirke ryghtes.<sup>3</sup>

Owing to a slip going wrong or to some such mishap, the ten lines

<sup>1</sup> C, IX, 84.

<sup>2</sup> C text (E. E. T. S.), p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> C, IX, 53.

were not inserted here but elsewhere, making there real nonsense. Removed here, they fit in perfectly. Piers, continuing to address his "dere sone," says:

Consaile nat the comune · the Kyng to displese  
Ne hem that han lawes to loke. . . .

Place these ten lines after the above, and all comes right: "Con-treplede nat conscience . . . . consaile nat the comune," etc. When Piers has finished this review of a knight's duties (quite incomplete in the earlier versions), the old text is resumed and fits also perfectly, the Knight saying as before: "Ich assente by Seynt Gyle." Then comes also very appropriately Piers's declaration as to the disposition he has to make before his journey, and, as a last preparation, the drawing-up of his testament.

There can be no doubt that this arrangement is the right one and was intended by the author; no doubt either that this is one more case of an afterthought which the original copyist inserted at the wrong place, the author taking no notice; and as there was no further revision the mistake was never corrected.

With version B and the misplaced Robert and Restitution passage, the case was different; if Langland failed then to have the error corrected, it was not so when, for the last time, he revised his whole work. To all appearances the revision was carried on in the same way as before, with a B text before him, erasures, corrections, and additions being made in the text, on the margins, or on slips. One of the author's most important corrections is (and this had been noticed before by critics) the new place in the text allotted by him to this same Robert and Restitution incident. That place is certainly the right one, the one Mr. Bradley suggests, and which the whole bearing of the passus imperiously commands. It comes after the confession and repentance of Coveitise.

One particular which has not been noticed deserves, however, special attention. The twenty-four lines consist, as we know, of six verses on the necessity of making restitution, followed by what concerns Robert the Robber; the six lines cannot be properly attached, such as they are, to any part of the poem, neither where they stand in A and B, nor where the confession of Coveitise

ends, which is their real place. Professor Manly supposes, as we have seen, a big gap supplying room enough for a transition from Sloth to Robert and Restitution. C, who being, as I think, the author, knew better, not only transferred the passage to the end of the confession of Coveitise, but supplied what was lacking to make it fit. What was lacking was not eighty lines as Mr. Manly would have us believe, but *one*.

Now, let anybody who has not the poem at his fingers' ends try to imagine what single verse can make sense of that nonsense: we have our twenty-four lines, beginning, in the two texts where they are misplaced, with:

And 3it I-chulle 3elden a3eyn · 3if I so muche have,<sup>1</sup>

and continuing with the passage telling us of Robert who "on *Reddite* he looked," and unable to repay, wept full sore. What is that *Reddite* he looked upon, and how can the passage be made to form a complete and satisfactory whole? No such personage as *Reddite* has been mentioned. There is not even any mention of some scroll with that word on it. I submit that only the author who knew from the first what he meant, could supply the single necessary verse. Let anyone who thinks he has a chance, try his skill.

Here is, in the meantime, what Langland did. The single line he added makes it clear that his intention had been, not to introduce one real man (Robert), but two real men; the restored passage reads:

Then was ther a Walishman · was wonderliche sory,  
 He highte 3yvan 3eld-a3eyn ·<sup>2</sup> if ich so moche have,  
 Al that ich wickedelich wan · sytthen ich wit hadde,  
 And þauh my lifode lacke · leten ich nelle,  
 þat ech man shal have hus · er ich hennes wende . . . .<sup>3</sup>  
 Roberd þe ryfeler · on *reddite* lokede  
 And for þer was nat wher-with · he wepte ful sore.

—C, VII, 309.

<sup>1</sup> A, V, 236; B, V, 463.

<sup>2</sup> The scribe who first placed this same passage—minus the torn-off or somehow left-off first line—at the end of the passus in A, considered that he supplied a sufficient connection by simply changing, "He highte 3yvan 3eld a3eyn," which, taken apart, made such nonsense as to strike even a scribe, into, "And 3it I-chulle 3elden a3eyn."

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Skeat considers these and the following lines, six in all, as forming the name of the Welshman, a suggestion he offers somewhat dubiously as he abstained in both his

Now we know, and it is not the least significant result of the introduction of this one line previously dropped by a careless copyist, now we know what was meant by Robert the Robber "on *Reddite* he looked;" he has at present someone to look upon, namely his fellow-thief turned penitent: Evan Yield-Again, otherwise Evan *Reddite*, both words being a translation one of the other. Mind, writes Dr. Furnivall, to whom I had submitted this argument, that Yield-Again is a man and *Reddite* a mere word. I mind very well, and draw from it one more argument that we have to do with a single author. For this is not an isolated case of a Latin word being transformed by Langland into a personage having its own part to play, and bearing an English name which is a mere translation of the Latin word. In passus VIII of A (B, VII, 110), at one of the most solemn moments in the whole poem, Piers unfolds his bull in which is written: "Qui bona egerunt ibunt ad vitam æternam." *Qui Bona egerunt* becomes at once Dowel, a separate personage who may help men or not, according to their merits, and the search for whom becomes the subject of the following passus. In the same connection may be quoted another example from a previous passus. In A, II, we hear that "Favel with feir speche" has brought together Fals and Meed. Some lines further on, "Feir speche" has become a steed which Favel rides to go to Westminster, and which is "ful feyntly a-tyred."<sup>1</sup>

But why, one may say, select, of all people, poor Evan as a typical thief, willing, it is true, to make restitution, but a thief none the less, and why produce him as a parallel to "Robert the

editions from hyphenating, as he does usually in such cases, the whole succession of words said to compose the colossal name. The hypothesis is not an impossible one as Welsh people were famous for the length of their names, and Langland was fond of inventing such appellations. It seems more probable, however—MSS giving of course no indication—that the name is simply Evan Yield-Again, and that the rest is the speech by which he, quite appropriately, shows that he is really "wonderliche sory." It frequently occurs with our poet that the transition from the indirect to the direct speech is very abrupt, and it is not always easy to be quite sure where the talking begins. See, for example, the passage B, II, 146, where the author tells us of Favel distributing money to secure false-witnesses; it ends by a line which we must suppose to be pronounced by Favel himself. The money is given, we are told, to secure the good will of notaries,

And felle False-witnes · with floreines ynowe;

"For he may Mede amaistrye · and maken at my wille."

Cf. C, III, 158, where Skeat hypothetically attributes a longer speech to Favel.

<sup>1</sup> A, II, 23, 140.

Robber," also a penitent thief, but a thief? With Robert the case is clear; the association of the two words, as Mr. Skeat, in his invaluable treasure of *Notes*, has well shown, was traditional: "Per Robert, robber designatur."<sup>1</sup> But what of Evan, "the Walishman"?

The name and the man fit the passage, one as well as the other. Welshmen were proverbially taunted by their English neighbors with an inclination to thievery (and they, in true neighborly fashion, reciprocated the compliment). Their own compatriot Giraldus Cambrensis, praises, in his *Description of Wales*, their quick intelligence, sobriety, hospitality, love of their country, but he has a chapter "Quod raptò vivunt," in the first phrase of which he explains that it is not for them a mere question of plundering their neighbors, but that they act likewise "among themselves."<sup>2</sup> The Parliamentary petitions show, on the other hand, that the complaints were ceaseless against Welshmen for their plunder and robberies; they "robbent et raunsenont et preignent bestes, biens et chateux;" the bordering shires are all spoilt and ruined ("degastez et destruz") owing to their misdeeds,<sup>3</sup> and, what is well worthy of remark, those shires whose names and complaints constantly recur in the series of petitions are, to take an example of the year 1376, the year of text B, "Wyrcestre, Salop, Stafford, Hereford Bristut et Glouc'."<sup>4</sup> The first-named of these shires which want Welsh thieves to be punished and obliged to make restitution—for this too is mentioned in the petitions<sup>5</sup>—is Worcester, the very region where, on "Malverne hulles," it befell Langland "for to slepe for weyrynesse of wandryng." No wonder that the misdeeds of Evan the Welshman, and Robert

<sup>1</sup> Wright's *Political Songs*, p. 49, mentioned in Skeat's *Notes*, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> "Ad hoc etiam rapiuis insistere, raptòque vivere, furto et latrocinio, non solum ad exteros et hostiles populos, verum etiam inter se proprium habent."—*Descriptio Cambriæ* . . . *Opera*, Brewer, Vol. VI, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> 3 Ric. II, 1379-80, *Rolls of Parliament*. Such complaints are particularly numerous during the reign of Richard II.

<sup>4</sup> 50 Ed. III, *Rolls*, Vol. II, 352.

<sup>5</sup> In a petition of 2 H. IV, 1400-1, embodying wishes which certainly did not originate then, we find that, to the great detriment of the "countez ajoignantz à les marches de Galys," Welshmen—"les gentz du Galys"—continued to steal "chivalx, jumentz, boefs, vaches, berbitz, porks, et altres lour biens." The interested parties ask that these "meffesours" be ordered to make restitution, "lour facent deliverer lour distressez biens et chateux issint prisez et arrestez, saunz ascun dilaye."—*Rolls*, Vol. III, p. 474.



the Robber were linked together in his mind, and that he never had a good word for Welshmen.<sup>1</sup> Even this detail deserves to be noted, that in showing his two penitent thieves, the common robber who is willing to make restitution, but has not withal, and the other who is willing and able to a certain extent, the poet strictly adhered to realities. The Evanses of the border usually carried away sheep and cattle which they might have bodily restored in most cases if they had been truly "sory" for their misdeeds.

It will be admitted, I hope, that once more poem and real facts turn out to fit together quite well, and tally better with my plea than with Professor Manly's. Far from showing a diversity of authors, the study of the question of the shifted passage strongly confirms what other indications led us to believe, namely that the poet who wrote C must have written A also. Both, and consequently B, must be, so far as shown by the facts under consideration, the work of one and the same Langland.

#### IV

But with reference to the shifted passage, other points have been mentioned by Professor Manly, it will be remembered, as denoting a plurality of authorship. According to him the author of B, not knowing what he was about, tried, "rather ingeniously," to justify the presence of the Robert and Restitution passage after the confession of Sloth, and, in view of this, he introduced in the latter's speech a declaration that "he had been so slothful as to withhold the wages of his servants and to forget to return things he had borrowed."

The author of B, on the contrary, never dreamt, as I take it, of making any such attempt, and if he took any notice at all of the passage, it was to prepare its being removed to where it should appear, though he neglected to see that the change was effected. His additions in the confession of Sloth show, in any case, no intention to lead to the subject of Robert the Robber and of restitution.

<sup>1</sup> "Griffin the Walsche," in the three texts of the same passus where Yield-Again appears, is mentioned as one of the roisterous friends of Gloton (A, V, 167).

As Langland was, at various periods, revising his text, he now and then filled gaps, replaced perfunctory sketches by more finished portraits, and added, as in the case of Coveitise for example, some excellent details to pictures already very good. He did so as it occurred to him, without showing that thoroughness and regularity of design that would have been a matter of course with an independent reviser and continuator, and the *raison d'être* of his work. Anyone, I consider, assigning to himself the task of revising such a poem as the first version of *Piers Plowman*, would not have left Lechour with his five insignificant, not to say irrelevant, lines, which are even reduced to four in B. But an author caring so little for geometrical regularity as Langland did, could very well leave Lechour alone for the present, to remodel his portrait later, or not, as suited his fancy. So it is that only in C do we find a real confession of this sin, in twenty-six lines.

A striking proof of this ungeometrical disposition of mind in our author is supplied by the very question of the Deadly Sins, a disposition, not to say an infirmity, so peculiar as practically to corroborate our belief in the unity of authorship. Every critic has noticed that, in the series of sins depicted in A, passus V, Wrath is lacking. It has never been observed that in this vast poem dealing with the reformation of mankind, in which the Deadly Sins constantly recur to the author's mind, being specifically dealt with four times, out of those four lists only one is complete, as first given in any of the three versions. The order is never the same, which makes it easier for the writer to forget one or the other of the sins; on second thoughts he sometimes corrects his list, sometimes not. An independent reviser would scarcely have acted so.

In the "feffement" of Meed (A, II, 63), the Deadly Sins figure as Pride, Envy, Avarice, Gluttony, Lechery, Sloth—Wrath is lacking. In the corresponding passage of B and C the order is, as usual, modified: Lechery comes before Gluttony, but the absence of Wrath has been noticed, and we find now mentioned: "the erldome of envye and wratthe togideres."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B, II, 83; C, III, 88.

Wrath was certainly absent from Langland's mind when he wrote this version A, as in his next enumeration there of the Sins, that is, in passus V, when they all confess and repent, Wrath is again forgotten. The order is not the same as before, being as follows: Pride, Lechery, Envy, Avarice, Gluttony, Sloth.<sup>1</sup> Having noticed the lack of Wrath in the previous passage, Langland, when he revised his text, added him here too, in B. This addition is naturally preserved in the C revision, but the order of the series is once more modified. In B the order was Pride, Lechery, Envy, Wrath, Avarice, Gluttony, Sloth; in C we have Pride, Envy, Wrath, Lechery, Avarice, Gluttony, Sloth.

Farther on, in the B text, the Seven Deadly Sins appear again as forming spots on the coat of "Haukyn the Actyf man." This is the only complete list, and is as follows: Pride, Wrath, Envy, Lechery, Avarice (alias Coveitise), Gluttony, Sloth.<sup>2</sup>

Farther on again, the sins are enumerated as constituting the main dangers threatening the wealthy, and the list is: Pride, Wrath, Gluttony, Sloth, Avarice, Lechery, Sloth again, total seven; but Sloth is named twice and Envy is lacking.<sup>3</sup>

In C, the Haukyn passage is fused with the confessions; but the list of the dangers is preserved. It is not left just as it was, for C notices that, in B, Sloth was named twice; he suppresses the word, therefore, on the least important of the two occasions, and so we have: "hus glotonye and grete synne" (C, XVII, 77), instead of: "his glotonie and his grete scleuthe" (B, XIV, 234). But, in spite of his desire, thus made evident, to revise and improve, the author of C, afflicted with the same infirmity of mind as the author of A and B, does not observe that Envy is lacking; he none the less gravely repeats twice that he is dealing with the "sevene synnes pat per ben" (XVII, 44), that he speaks "of the sevene synnes" (XVII, 61). As there was no further revision, this list remained definitively incomplete. Such peculiarities are indeed so peculiar as to be, in a way, the author's mark—his seal

<sup>1</sup> A, V, 45.

<sup>2</sup> B, XIII, 276.

<sup>3</sup> B, XIV, 215.

and signature.<sup>1</sup> It is most unlikely that any reviser would have failed to "find the concord of this discord."

Concerning the additions to Sloth, in version B, it is easy to show that, like those introduced, at the same time, by the author in the confession of several other sins, they have no object but to bring his description nearer to the generally accepted type. For what regards Sloth, commonly held to be the source and cause of so many other faults, the poet examines the whole life of the slothful man, mainly, in his eyes, the man who *neglects* his duties. This was not at all a strange or original notion, but a commonplace one in those days. The pleasure such a man takes in finding "an hare in a felde" does not, to be sure, correspond exactly to our idea of slothfulness, but it corresponds to Langland's, who shows his sinner neglecting, meanwhile, to make himself proficient in church Latin. Sloth also neglects to come to mass in time, to fulfil his vows, to perform his penances, to keep his own house well, to pay his servants, workmen, and creditors their due, to thank those who have been kind to him. He wastes quantities of "flesche and fische," cheese, ale, etc. His life has ever been one of neglect:

I ran aboute in ȝouthe · and ȝaf me nouȝte to lerne.

There is no intimation that any of his misdeeds was committed with the intention of *winning* money; it was with him mere negligence; if the author of B had really introduced any of these additions in order to make the confession fit with the restitution passage, he would have expressed himself otherwise, or would have chosen another alliterating letter and another word than *wan* in the line:

<sup>1</sup> The following table shows the number and order of the Sins as given in the earliest version where they appear.

A, II	A, V	B, XIII	B, XIV	C, XVII
Pride Envy Avarice Gluttony Lechery Sloth	Pride Lechery Envy Avarice Gluttony Sloth	Pride Wrath Envy Lechery Avarice Gluttony Sloth	Pride Wrath Gluttony Sloth Avarice Lechery Sloth again	Pride Wrath Gluttony Avarice Lechery Sloth
Wrath is lacking	Wrath is lacking		Envy is lacking	Envy is lacking

And ȝete wil I ȝelde aȝein · if I so moche have,  
Al þat I wikkedly wan.<sup>1</sup>

In truth, as I said, Langland had no other intent, in remodeling this passage, than to bring his picture near to the accepted type, and so he did. We may see in Chaucer what was the importance of that sin so summarily dispatched, at first, in the Visions, and how it led people to the *neglect* of all their duties, the temporal ones as well as the spiritual :

Necligence is the norice [of all harme] . . . . This foule sinne Accidie is eek ful greet enemy to the lyfode of the body ; for it ne hath no purveaunce agayn temporel necessitee ; for it forsleweth and forsluggeth, and destroyeth alle goodes temporeles by recchelesnesse . . . . Of [lachesse] comth poverte and destruccioun, bothe of spirituel and temporel thinges.<sup>2</sup>

In similar fashion the confession of Sloth, as it reads in text B of *Piers Plowman*, ends by an allusion to the state of beggary to which he has been reduced by his "foule sleuthe." Not a word in these additions implies that the author really considered that the Robert and Restitution passage should come next and that he ought to insert details leading up to it.

Dwelling on Wrath, forgotten in version A, and added in version B, Professor Manly thinks he detects a proof of a difference of authorship in the differences of merit and of style. The Wrath confession in B is, according to him, "totally different in style from the work of A, and indeed more appropriate for Envy than for Wrath, containing as it does no very distinctive traits of Wrath. The additions . . . . are confused, vague, and entirely lacking in the finer qualities of imagination, organization, and diction shown in all A's work. In A, each confession is sketched with inimitable vividness and brevity."<sup>3</sup>

The answer is: (1) An author is not bound, under pain of being cleft in twain, always to show the same merits, in every respect, on every occasion, at all times; (2) the confessions in A are not so good, and the additions in B are not so bad as Professor Manly makes them out. As a matter of fact, some of these additions are excellent, and

<sup>1</sup> B, V, 463.

<sup>2</sup> *Parson's Tale—De Accidia*, §§ 53 ff.  
*Modern Philology*, Vol. III, p. 365; *Cambridge History*, II, p. 15.

more than one of the cleverest and most humorous touches in the whole poem are to be found in them;<sup>1</sup> others are not so happy. The same may be said of the confessions as first drafted in A, some of which are excellent, and others far from good.

Thus it is that, in version A, supposed to be so perfect, Pride, represented by Pernel Proud-herte, concludes her speech by a promise to

merci be-seche

Of al that ichave i-had · envye in myn herte.<sup>2</sup>

As Mr. Manly said of the Wrath portrait in B, this is "indeed more appropriate for Envy" than for Pride, and this similarity in aptitude for confusion, if it has any bearing at all on the problem, can but confirm our belief in a unity of authorship. The same repenting Pernel undertakes, in version A, to reform: she will wear a hair smock,

Forte fayten hire flesch · that frele was to synne.

This kind of penance and this allusion to flesh "frail to sin" would certainly fit another Sin better than Pride, as shown by the author of A himself who, in passus III, had had the words "heo is frele of hire flesch" applied to Meed in the same speech where she is described as being "as comuyn as pe cart-wei."<sup>3</sup> In this same A text, described as so far above the additions in B, repenting Lechour declares that his penance will consist in eating and drinking less than before on Saturdays; which is, if one may be permitted to say so, to "take it easy." While Professor Manly alleges that the attributes of Wrath in text B would better suit Envy, it turns out that in A, inversely, one of the classical attributes of Wrath, the

<sup>1</sup> Important additions were introduced in the confession of Coveitise. Repentance obliges the sinner to examine his conscience (a passage has been quoted above, p. 13), and tell of his various misdeeds among chapmen, lords, Lombards, etc. Repentance goes on saying:

"Hastow pite on pore men · þat mote nedes borwe?"

"I have as moche pite of pore men · as pedlere hath of cattes,

þat wolde kille hem, yf he cacche hem nyzte · for coveitise of here skynnes."

—B, V, 257.

All the passage is as vivid, sharp, and pregnant as any anywhere in version A.

<sup>2</sup> A, V, 52.

<sup>3</sup> A, III, 117, 127.

sowing of feuds and quarrels, is bestowed on Envy, who says of his neighbor :

Bitwene him and his meyne · ichave i-mad wratthe,  
Bothe his lyf and his leome · was iost thorw my tonge.<sup>1</sup>

If this sort of confusion between Wrath and Envy proved anything, it would again prove unity of authorship, as we find it in both A and B. It proves nothing in reality, except that Langland was of his time, and that he was of it as well when he wrote B as when he wrote A. In all mediaeval accounts of the Deadly Sins, the descriptions constantly overlap each other, one of the most remarkable cases being precisely that of Wrath and Envy; the one was held to be the source of the other: "Envye," says Wyclif, "is modir of ire."<sup>2</sup> "After Envye," says Chaucer's Parson, "wol I descryven the sinne of Ire. For soothly, who-so hath envye upon his neighebor, anon he wole comunly finde him a matere of wratthe, in worde or in dede, agayns him to whom he hath envye." So begins Chaucer's chapter on Wrath in the *Parson's Tale*. Well might Langland include Wrath and Envy in a single "erledome," when revising his first text.

In that description of Wrath so unsatisfactory to Professor Manly, and added to text B, this sin is shown "with two whyte eyen, and nyvelynge (sniveling) with the nose." He goes about sowing discord, making friars and members of the secular clergy hate each other, scattering scandal and jangles in convents (not an insignificant sin this one, according to our author, who had said before, in version A, "Japers and jangelers, Judas children"), behaving so that people meant to live in peace,

Hadde þei had knyves, bi Cryst · her eyther had killed other.<sup>3</sup>

All this is considered by Professor Manly so preposterous that the author of A could never have written anything like it; if the author of B did, he must have been a different man. But, as we have just seen, the author of A was not at all incapable of admitting irrelevant

<sup>1</sup> A, V, 80. Cf. Chaucer, who, however, is careful to place his statement under *Ire*: "For soothly, almost al the harm that any man dooth to his neighebores comth of wratthe."—*Parson's Tale*, § 34.

<sup>2</sup> *On the Seven Deadly Sins*, chap. xii.

<sup>3</sup> B, V, 165.

matter into his text, and on the other hand, there was nothing preposterous in these additions; they were, on the contrary, commonplace; such characteristics are paid full attention to by Chaucer's Parson: "Now comth the sinne of hem that sowen or maken discord amonges folk, which is a sinne that Crist hateth outrely." Jangling is another characteristic of Wrath: "Now comth Jangling . . . [and] comth the sinne of Japeres . . . . The vileyns wordes and knakkes of Japeris [conforten] hem that travaillen in the service of the devel."<sup>1</sup>

This same chapter on Ire well shows how vague were the limits assigned then to each sin. Following accepted manuals, and not considering there was any reason for him to make changes, Chaucer speaks, as coming under the scope of Ire, of those who "treden unreverently the sacrement of the auter," of swearing, of the various sinful ways of bringing about miscarriages, of "ad-juracioun, conjuracion," charms and the like, of "Flateringe" unexpectedly associated with Wrath: "I rekene flaterye in the vyces of Ire, for ofte tyme, if o man be wrooth with another, thanne wol he flaterer som wight to sustene him in his querele." Here is a good occasion for anyone who remembers in what style the rest of the *Canterbury Tales* were written to show that England rejoiced not only in several Langlands but in a large number of Chaucers.

## V

Other arguments yet have been put forth in order to show that the author of version B could not have been the author of version A; very telling ones if they held good. Remodeling version A, the author of B is said to have misunderstood or spoilt several passages in it, and he cannot therefore have originally composed that version. The following examples are given, being doubtless the best available ones.<sup>2</sup>

—"In II, 21 ff. Lewte is introduced as the leman of lady Holy Church and spoken of as feminine." Allusion is here made by

<sup>1</sup> *Sequitur de Ira*, §§ 45, 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Cambridge History*, II, p. 32.



Professor Manly to the lines in B where the handsome lady "purfiled with pelure" tells the dreamer that Meed has

. . . . ylakked my lemman · pat lewte is hoten  
And bilowen hire to lordes · pat lawes han to kepe.

The answer is: (1) There cannot be any question here of B having misunderstood A, as the passage is quite different in both texts, and there is no mention at all of Lewte in A. (2) "Lemman" does not necessarily mean a man and a paramour; to use it otherwise is not to commit any error; a leman is a tenderly loved being of any sex: Spenser's Proteus asks Florimel "to be his leman and his ladie trew." If Florimel could play the part of a leman, why not Lewte? And, as the pelure purfiled lady in the Visions was Holy Church, we may take it for granted that a difference of sex had little to do in her choice of a "lemman." (3) Very possibly there may be nothing more in the passage than a scribe's error, "hire" being put in instead of "hym;" the more probable as the correction is made in C:

And lackyd hym to lordes · that lawes han to kepe.<sup>1</sup>

Of B having failed to understand or of having committed any mistake, there is no trace.

—"In II, 25, False instead of Wrong is father of Meed, but is made to marry her later." It is a fact that we have in A, "Wrong was hir syre," and in B, "Fals was hire fader," also that in B, as in all the other versions, Meed none the less marries Fals.

Without any doubt, when writing B, the author decided to modify entirely the family connections of Meed, and not without good cause. In the first version, so highly praised, the incoherency was such as to make a change indispensable. Wrong was very badly chosen as a father for Meed, and was given, besides, nothing to do. The marriage was not arranged by him; the marriage portion was not supplied by him; in the journey to Westminster he was forgotten; his part was limited to signing first among many others, the "feffment" charter supplied by other people. And while he did nothing in this important occurrence when, as

<sup>1</sup> C, III, 21.  
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a father, he should have been most busy, he suddenly reappeared in the next passus (as a murderer and a thief); he was then full of activity. Together with Peace, Wit, Wisdom, etc., Meed took part in the scene, but her blood-relationship with Wrong had been entirely forgotten, and not a word was said implying any connection between the two: incoherency was there absolute. Wrong, moreover, was too thoroughly an objectionable father for Meed. From Wrong, nothing but wrong can come; and yet, in this same text A, no less a personage than Theology assures us that Meed is not so bad after all. She is of gentle blood, "a mayden ful gent; heo mihte cusse þe Kyng for cosyn . . ." How so, if the daughter of Wrong? In the same version, on the other hand, Favel does everything, and acts as the real father; it is he who assumes the responsibility and the charges of the marriage; he who supplies money to secure false witnesses at Westminster, who rejoices with Fals at the prospective success of the lawsuit. It is between him and Fals—Wrong being forgotten—that Meed rides to London.

The obvious thing to do in case of a revision was to suppress Wrong in the marriage preliminaries, and give Meed a less opprobrious parentage. Favel, not so repulsive as Wrong, was a ready-found father, the part of whom he had in fact already been playing. Such are precisely the changes adopted by Langland when re-writing his poem. That Fals instead of Favel appears in the half-line quoted above, owing to an obvious mistake as Meed is to marry Fals immediately after, is of no importance. Such slips of the pen would be difficult for any copyist, and even for any author, to avoid, in such a passage as this, with so many lines alliterating in *f*, and Favel fair speech, and Fals fickle tongue, constantly succeeding one another.

This is not a mere surmise, put forth for the sake of argument; it is a demonstrable fact. The same confusion between these two names, the same use of the one instead of the other, do not occur only in text B, but also in text C, and also in text A itself: one more kind of mistake which, if it demonstrates anything, can only show a similitude of authorship. In version A, II, the feoffment is said, on l. 58, to be made by Fals, and three lines farther on by Favel; Fals is a mistake for Favel. In version C, we are told

in passus III, l. 25, that "Favel was hure fader," and on l. 121, that "Fals were hure fader."

The intention to make it Favel throughout, in B as well as C, is, however, certain: Fals in these texts continues to be the prospective husband and therefore cannot be the father; Wrong is no longer mentioned in either, so that there is only left Favel, correctly mentioned as such in C, III, 25. The same intention to give Meed a different parentage, better justifying Theology's otherwise ludicrous remarks, is also shown by Langland adding in B a mention that Meed had "Amendes" for her mother, a virtuous character, and the point is further insisted on in C: Meed's marriage cannot be valid without her mother's consent—

Amendes was hure moder · by trewe mennes lokyng ;  
Withoute hure moder Amendes · Mede may noght be wedded.<sup>1</sup>

The author of B has certainly neither "misunderstood" nor spoilt A in this passage; just the reverse; he made sense of what was very near being nonsense.

—"In II, 74 ff., B does not understand that the feoffment covers precisely the provinces of the Seven deadly Sins, and by elaborating the passage spoils the unity of intention."

That B, on the contrary, understood perfectly that the Seven Deadly Sins were in question is shown by the fact that he took notice of only six appearing in A at this place, and that he added the seventh. He gives some supplementary details on each of the sinful "erledomes" or "lordships" bestowed on the couple, the "chastlets" and "countes" these territories include. The unity of intention is in no way impaired.

—"In II, 176, B has forgotten that the bishops are to accompany Meed to Westminster and represents them as borne 'abrode in visytynge.'"

The answer is (1) B had no chance to *forget* any such thing, as he was, without any doubt, working with a text of A at his elbow. When he wrote his l. 176, he had before him l. 151 in A. (2) Contrary to what Professor Manly suggests, there is here no incoherency chargeable to B. In A, exactly as in B, Langland indulges

<sup>1</sup> C, III, 122.

in an incidental fling at bishops; no more in one case than in the other were they to go to Westminster at all. In A, Civil gives advice how each steed should be "dight;" deans and subdeans will be used "as desterers,"

For thei schullen beren bisschops · and bringen hem to reste ;

which may mean anything one pleases, except the implying of a tumultuous journey to Westminster or anywhere else. Of Westminster not a word; and when, in version A, we reach that place with Fals and his crew, nothing is said of any bishop being part of the troop. In B, we have the same speech of Civil, with a few more details: deans and subdeans will be saddled with silver,

To bere bischopes aboute · abroad in visytynge.

As this fling at bishops had, in both texts, nothing to do with the story, the author, revising his poem for the last time, suppressed it entirely in text C, a not isolated example of good taste given then by him.

—"Worst of all, perhaps, B did not notice" the shifted passage on Robert and Restitution, and the introduction into the text of the names of the wife and children of Piers, at a place (A, VII, 71-74) where they interrupt Piers' speech before his journey.

This has been answered before.

## VI

Professor Manly, it will be remembered, holds that the Visions were written by five different men; version A being the work of three, versions B and C of one each. We have discussed his theories concerning John But and the author of B, this last being the one about whom he took most pains. Besides the arguments enumerated above, he put forth some more concerning this same version; but as they apply also to the differences of authorship said to be discernible in the rest of the work, all these can be discussed together.

These arguments are drawn from differences in literary merit in opinions, meter, and dialect noticeable in the successive versions of *Piers Plowman*. Those differences are, according to Mr. Manly, so

considerable that it is impossible to explain them "as due to such changes as might occur in any man's mental qualities and views of life in the course of thirty or thirty-five years, the interval between the earliest and latest versions."<sup>1</sup> In other words, all successive versions of any given work, or any separate part therein, showing such differences as we find in *Piers Plowman*, are proved by experience to be due to different authors; therefore the two parts of A (we exclude John But and his few lines) and the versions B and C are, in spite of the indications to the contrary supplied by MSS, and of all corroborating evidence, the work of four separate authors.

It is easy to show that this is not, in any way, a telling argument. Not only have the differences between the various versions of our poem been, as I think, greatly exaggerated, but, taking them at Professor Manly's own estimation, they would prove, in themselves, nothing at all, for a large number of works of every date and from every country can be quoted offering even deeper differences, and differences often occurring in a much shorter space of time; and yet the whole is indisputably the work of one single author, who had simply changed his mind, or his manner, or both, or was better inspired at one time than at another.

The differences in meter and dialect need not detain us much. They are mentioned "pour mémoire," rather than discussed by Mr. Manly, and we must wait till the case is put forth with an attempt at demonstration. We do not think that, when it is, it will prove at all a difference of authorship. Concerning dialects, it is very difficult to distinguish, in cases like this, what is attributable to the author and what to the scribe. Mr. Manly tells us that a careful study of the MSS would show that, "between A, B, and C, there exist dialectal differences incompatible with the supposition of a single author. This can easily be tested in the case of the pronouns and the verb *are*" (p. 34). But we find as great differences between the various copies of the *same* version; and shall we have to believe that each copy was the work of a different poet? Take a pronoun, as Mr. Manly suggests; we shall find, for example, that in one MS of version C, the pronoun *she* appears

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History*, II, p. 4.

as 30, in another MS of the same version as *huc*, in another as *sche* and *scheo*.<sup>1</sup> Yet the first two MSS not only give the same version, but belong to the same subclass and are very closely connected; dialectal forms are none the less markedly different.<sup>2</sup> The excellent Vernon MS of A has southern forms which do not appear in other MSS of the same version. The MS 79 at Oriol College, containing text B, is pure Midland; the MS of the same text, Dd. 1. 17, at the University Library, Cambridge, offers northern forms.

Metrical differences tell even less, not only because, here again, scribes may have had something to do with them (we have, for example, a MS of A whose scribe was so fond of alliteration that he often modified the text to add, against all rule, a fourth alliterating word<sup>3</sup>), but because, if we admitted that changes of this sort proved differences of authorship, we would have to admit that two different Miltons wrote *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*,<sup>4</sup> and that 37 different Shakespeares wrote Shakespeare's 37 plays. "Let us first take the point of metre," says Dr. Furnivall in his just-published *Life* of the great dramatist, "in which Shakspeare was changing almost play by play, during his whole life."<sup>5</sup> Prof. Manly states that, between the two parts of A, admitted by all critics to have been written at some years' distance in time, there are notable differences "in regard to run-on lines and masculine endings."<sup>6</sup> This would show that the *Tempest* cannot be from the same Shakespeare as *Love's Labour's Lost*, since there is one run-on line for every three in the first, and one for every eighteen in the second, and there are 1,028 riming lines in

<sup>1</sup> MSS Laud, 656, Bodleian; Phillipp's, 8, 231; University Library, Cambridge, Ff. 5. 35.

<sup>2</sup> A striking example of the close connection between these two MSS of the same version, and also of the persistence of scribes in adhering to their own private dialectal forms, is given by Skeat, Preface of C, p. xxix (Early Engl. Text Soc.): the scribe of the Phillipp's MS having written once by mistake *huc* instead of *he*, the scribe of the Laud MS "actually followed suit by substituting his favourite term 30, not noticing that *huc* was wrong."

<sup>3</sup> MS of Lincoln's Inn, version A; Skeat, Preface of A, p. xxii.

<sup>4</sup> "The difference in kind between the two poems is signalised in certain differences in the language and versification."—D. Masson, *Milton's Poetical Works*, Introduction to *Paradise Regained*.

<sup>5</sup> Furnivall and Munro, *Shakespeare's Life and Work*, 1903, p. 66. Cf. pp. 90, 114, 137, 147, and the tables, p. 263.

<sup>6</sup> *Cambridge History*, II, p. 18.

*Love's Labour's Lost*, and only two in the *Tempest* (and none in *Winter's Tale*).

Concerning differences of literary merit and mental power, Prof. Manly declares that the first part of A (episode of Meed and Piers) is the best in the whole work; and not only the best, for after all it must happen to any author that one of his poems or cantos is his best, but so far above all the rest as to imply a difference of authorship. Those first eight passus are remarkable, he says, for their "clearness and definiteness and structural excellence;" they are conspicuous for their "unity of structure;" the writer never "forgets for a moment the relation of any incident to his whole plan. . . . Only once or twice does he interrupt his narrative to express his own views or feelings. . . . There is nowhere even the least hint of any personal animosity against any class of men as a class." The style is of unparalleled "picturesqueness and verve;" the art of composition is "one of the most striking features," of this portion of the poem.<sup>1</sup>

In the latter part of A, on the contrary, that is the Dowel passus, and in the additions introduced into versions B and C, those qualities disappear to a large extent; we have much more "debate and disquisition" than "vitalised allegory" (why not?); the author is interested in casuistry, in theological problems, predestination, etc. (again, why not?); the "clearness of phrasing, the orderliness and consecutiveness of thought . . . are entirely lacking."<sup>2</sup> The author of B has the same defects to an even more marked degree; he is incapable of "consecutive thinking;" his "point of view is frequently and suddenly and unexpectedly shifted; topics alien to the main theme intrude because of the use of a suggestive word;"<sup>3</sup> he, too, shows interest in predestination (which in any case brings him near one of the supposed authors of A); he cannot follow his plan properly.

As a matter of fact, there are no such wide differences. Great as are the merits of the first part of A, written with all the vigor and vivacity of younger manhood, they are mixed with the very kind of faults Mr. Manly detects in the second part and in the successive versions. Incoherencies are numerous and glaring; the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 5, 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 17, 18.

<sup>3</sup> P. 24.

aptitude to start off on a new track because a mere word has evoked a new thought in the writer's mind is remarkable, and in this we can find once more his seal and signature, the proof of his authorship. None of the stories lead to anything, to anywhere, nor are in any way concluded.

Let us glance, as we are bidden, at the first part of version A, beginning with passus I. The dreamer asks a "lovely ladi," who turns out to be Holy Church, to interpret the dream of the two castles and the field full of folk, which he has had in the prologue. The Lady answers in substance: The tower on this toft is the place of abode of Truth, or God the father; but do not get drunk. Why drunk, and why those details about drunkenness that has caused Lot's sins, the nature of which is recalled? The word *drink* having come under the pen of the author, he started off on this subject and made it the principal topic (eight lines) in Holy Church's answer, though it had nothing to do with the dream she had been requested to interpret.

The dreamer thanks her very much, and asks now what is this money that these men are treasuring up and "so fast holden." The Lady makes a somewhat rambling answer, both question and answer being equally unexpected and irrelevant. The "feld ful of folk" in the prologue had been represented as filled with men who ploughed the land, prayed, glosed on the gospel, overfed themselves, pleaded before the courts, traded, did, in fact, all sorts of things, except hold fast "moneye on pis molde."

What the Lady should have explained was not hard to make clear. The subject of the dream in the prologue was nothing else than what the author must have seen in reality a number of times, namely, the world as represented in a mystery play, just as we may see it pictured in the MS of the Valenciennes Passion:<sup>1</sup> on one side, God's Tower or Palace; on the opposite side, the devil's castle, "pat dungen . . . pat dredful is of siht," says Langland; between the two, a vast space for the various scenes in man's life or in the story of his salvation. It is simple, but the Lady loses her way, and the only people she describes are those that just happen not to have been there.

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced, e. g., in my *Shakespeare in France*, p. 63.



Asked by the dreamer, who has apparently ceased to care about the people in his dream, how he could be saved, the Lady advises him to think only of Truth; clerks "scholde techen" what Truth is. But this word *scholde* has caused the author's mind to wander, and instead of enlightening her hearer on his duties, the Lady begins to describe what other sorts of people "should" do, and especially a sort very far removed from the dreamer's condition, namely kings and knights; the Lady informs us that they "scholde kepen hem bi Reson." Kings in general remind her of King David in particular, and David and his knights remind her of Crist, who is the king of heaven, and of angels who are his knights; we have therefore something about angels, some of whom are good and others are bad, as witness Lucifer about whom we now get various details.

The poem continues as it began; the experience might be prolonged indefinitely. The dreamer insisting to know what is Truth, the Lady says that it consists in loving God more than oneself, but the word *love* having evoked a new train of thoughts, the poet descants now on the necessity of having "reufe on þe pore;" if you do not "love þe pore" you cannot be saved, even if you have been as chaste as a child; but the word *chaste* starting a new idea, the author branches off on this topic: to be chaste is not enough; "moni chapeleyns ben chast," yet lack charity, and so on.

None of the visions, episodes, or stories in these passus have any ending, nor are continued by what comes next. After the field full of folk, interpreted in the way we have seen by Holy Church, after the dreamer's appeal to know how he can be saved, we have the story of Meed and of her intended nuptials with Fals. A question of the dreamer how to know "the Fals," of which Fals not a word had been said before, is all there is of "structural excellence" in the connecting of the two episodes. Theology objects to Meed's marriage; the case is brought before the King who wants to give her hand to the Knight Conscience. Conscience refuses, makes a speech, and consents at last to kiss Meed, provided Reason agrees he should. Reason is brought forth, makes a speech on quite different topics, and we never hear any more of the kiss or the marriage. "þene Pees com to parlement;" a new episode begins, the

word "pene" being all that connects it with the previous one. And so on, till the end.

Worthy of the profoundest admiration as Langland is, he deserves it for qualities quite different from that "structural excellence" which Professor Manly thinks he discovers in version A and in no other. In this version, in version B, and in version C—the same combination of qualities and defects denoting the same man—the poet's mind is frequently rambling and his poem recalls rather the mists on "Malverne hulles" than the straight lines of the gardens at Versailles.

Another difference mentioned by Professor Manly is that only "once or twice" the author of the first part of A interrupts his narrative to express his own views. Here again the difference with the other versions is remarkably exaggerated. We find in A, such passages as those beginning: "Bote god to alle good folk . . ." III, 55;<sup>1</sup> "Bote Saloman þe Sage . . ." III, 84 (the author interferes in these two cases to give the lie to his own personages); "I warne þou, alle werk-men . . ." VII, 306; "þe Legistres and Lawyers . . ." VIII, 62; "For-thi I rede þow renkes (creatures) . . . And nomeliche, þe Meires. . . ." VIII, 168. Here are, in any case, five examples instead of "one or two." The Langland who wrote A resembled too much, in reality, the Langland who wrote B and C to be able to resist the temptation to interfere, interrupt, and make direct appeals to his compatriots—to you mayors, you lords, you workmen—whom he wanted so much to convert. All these Langlands, so strangely similar, cared little for art, as compared with moral improvement.

We have been told also that there is nowhere in A "even the least hint of any personal animosity against any class of men as a

<sup>1</sup> The intervention of the author in this case interrupts the story of Meed who has just been heard by her confessor, and has been promised absolution if she gives a glass window to the church. The author expresses his personal indignation at such doings, and beseeches "you, lordynges," not to act thus; lords make him think of mayors, and the word mayor recalls to him the duties of such dignitaries; in his usual rambling fashion, the poet passes on accordingly to the duty for mayors to punish "on pillories" untrustworthy "Brewesters, Bakers, Bochers and Cookes;" and when we return at last to Meed, as the author had just been speaking of mayors, he makes her address "þe meir," though none had been mentioned, and there was none there before. Here again there is no cause for praising A's "structural excellence."

class." In this, too, I must confess I do not see great differences between any of the Visions; the same deep antipathies appear in A as elsewhere: scorn for idle people of whatever sort, strong animosity against lawyers carried to the point of absolute unfairness,<sup>1</sup> contempt for pardoners, pilgrims, and all those who think that, by performing rites, they can be saved, scorn and disgust for friars, who are constantly mentioned with contumely, and certainly not as individuals but as a class: the whole lot of them ("all þe foure ordres," the poet is careful to say) are, like the lawyers, condemned wholesale.<sup>2</sup>

If the merits of the first part of A have been, as I consider, exaggerated, so have the demerits of the second part and of the two revisions. The second part of A has, it is true, more dull places than the first: no author is constantly equal to his best work. But even in this portion of the poem, we find passages of admirable beauty, such as Langland alone produced in these days; the one, for example, where he tells us of his doubts, and of his anguish at his inability to reconcile the teachings of the Church with his idea of justice. Aristotle—"who wrouȝte betere?"—is held to be damned; and Mary Magdalen—"who miȝte do wers?"—as well as the penitent thief, with his whole life of sin behind him, are saved. Happy those who do not try to know so much, who do not feel those torments; happy the "pore peple, as plouȝmen" who can (and what a grand line!)—

Percen with a *pater-noster* · the paleis of hevene.<sup>3</sup>

The value of the most picturesque and humorsome scenes in the rest of the poem fades in comparison with passages of this sort.

<sup>1</sup> The author cannot admit that a lawyer's work deserves a salary as well as any other kind of work; he would like them to plead "for love of ur Lord," and not for "pous and poundes" (A, ProL. 86).

<sup>2</sup> I font þere Freres · all þe Foure Ordres,  
Prechinge þe peple · for profyt of heore wombes.

—A, ProL. 55.

Friars receive Fals; they open their house to Lye and keep "him as a Frere" (II, 206); Meed's confessor who is a model of low rascality is "i-copet as a Frere" (III, 36); Envy wears the "fore sleveys" of "a Freris frokke" (V, 64), etc. The fact that a copy of *Piers Plowman* belonged to a friars' convent has no bearing on the question; Wycliffite Bibles were also found in convents.

<sup>3</sup> A, end of passus X.

Others, of a different stamp, might be quoted, such as the brief and striking portrait of Wit, the model man of learning :

He was long and lene · to loken on ful symple,  
Was no pride on his apparail · ne no povert noper,  
Sad of his semblaunt · and of softe speche.<sup>1</sup>

What has been said of the differences between the two parts of A cannot but be emphatically repeated for what concerns those supposed to exist between A and B. Given the time elapsed, as shown by the political allusions, those differences, if any there be, are far from striking. A remarkable point deserves attention at the start. As acknowledged by Professor Manly himself, the author of B makes excellent, vivid, and picturesque additions to the first two episodes (stories of Meed and of Piers Plowman), and introduces abstract, discursive, and scarcely coherent ones in the Dowel part; in other words B is, from this point of view, an exact counterpart of A, the picture being simply drawn on a larger scale. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that men so similarly impressed and influenced by similar topics were not improbably the same man.

In reality, defects and qualities bring the three versions very near one another. Professor Manly tells us that the author of B is in "helpless subjection to the suggestions of the words he happens to use;" so is, as we have seen, the author of A. The author of B "loses sight of the plan of the work;" so does A. B, Mr Manly continues, shows perhaps as much power as A in "visualising detail;" but he is "incapable of visualising a group or of keeping his view steady enough to imagine and depict a developing action."<sup>2</sup> One may be permitted to ask what is the crowd which B ought to have described, and which he failed to visualise? Of the perfection of his power of observation and the picturesqueness of his style some examples have been given, many others might be added; and the famous rat-parliament, one of the most characteristic and best "visualised" scenes in the poem, is present in everybody's memory.

As for his incapacity to understand the development of an action, B shows certainly, by the suppression of Wrong as father of Meed,

<sup>2</sup> *Cambridge History*, p. 32.

the giving of "Amendes" to her as a mother, and the other modifications in the passage, that he well understood how an action should develop. C shows it even better by the suppression of the lines telling, in previous versions, how Piers tore up his bull of pardon out of spite, and simply because contradiction had irritated him. This is one of the grandest, if not the grandest scene in the poem, the most memorable, even for us to-day, the culminating point of the work. "Pleyn pardoun" is granted to ploughmen and other poor people who have led hard lives on this earth without murmuring; it is the recompense of their humility; the Lord gives it to them "for love of heore lowe hertes."<sup>1</sup> Piers, can we see your pardon?

And Pers at his preyere · the pardon unfoldeth,  
 And I bi-hynden hem bothe · bi-heold al the bulle.  
 In two lynes hit lay · and not a lettre more,  
 And was i-writen riht thus · in witesse of treuthe :  
*Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam ;*  
*Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.*

It is only in revising his text for the last time that the author felt how greatly improved the whole episode would be if cut short here, that the action was now fully developed, and that any addition, and especially the tearing of the bull by Piers whose main treasure it should have been, simply spoiled it. He therefore suppressed this incident, twenty-six lines in all, and having briefly shown, by the priest's remark, that such a teaching was too high for vulgar ecclesiastics, he tells us he awoke as the sun was setting in the south, and he found himself

Meteles and moneyles · on Malvern hulles.<sup>2</sup>

If the vague subject of Dowel, Dobet, Dobest, inspires the author of B and C with as much rambling as the author of the second part of A, it inspires him, too, with several of those splendid touches of eloquence and feeling which also shine in that same second part—and nowhere else in the literature of the day. There we find,

<sup>1</sup> A, VIII, 87 ff.

<sup>2</sup> C, X, 295.

for example, added in version B, the incomparable prayer to the Creator, in passus XIV :

Ac pore peple, thi prisoneres · lorde, in the put of myschief,  
 Conforte tho creatures · that moche care suffren  
 Thorw derth, thorw drouth · alle her dayes here,  
 Wo in wynter tymes · for wantyng of clothes,  
 And in somer tyme selde · soupen to the fulle ;  
 Conforte thi careful · Cryst, in thi ryche,  
 For how thow confortest alle creatures · clerkes bereth wisesse,  
*Convertimini ad me, et salvi eritis.*<sup>1</sup>

In version B also we find, for the first time, the great passus on "Crystes passioun and penaunce,"<sup>2</sup> with the author awakening at the end, to the sound of Easter bells, not saddened and anxious, as formerly while the sun was going down on Malvern hills, but cheered and joyful on the morning of the Resurrection. It is difficult to read such passages, so full of fervor, so sincere, and so eloquent, without thinking of Dante or Milton—unless one chooses to think of Langland alone.

## VII

Studying text C apart from the others, Professor Manly points out certain traits special to it and marking it, he believes, as the work of a separate author. Two examples are quoted by him of "C's failure to understand B" (p. 33); other instances, we are told, might be given, but these are doubtless the most telling ones. The first example consists in a comparison of ll. 11-16 in the prologue of B with the similar expanded passage forming ll. 9-18 in C, passus I. Professor Manly considers the picture entirely spoilt. Be it so; the case, as we shall see, would be far from a unique one; more than one author spoilt, in his old age, the work of his youth. But it is not certain that it is so, and many, I think, would not willingly lose the new line added there to broaden the spectacle offered to the view of the dreamer who sees before him :

Al the welthe of this worlde · and the woo bothe.

The second example is the change introduced in ll. 160-66 of the Prologue in B (episode of the Rat Parliament). The "ratou

<sup>1</sup> B, XIV, 174.

<sup>2</sup> B, XVIII; C, XXI.

of renon" suggests that a bell be hung to the neck of the cat: there are certain beings in "the cite of London," who bear bright collars and go as they please "bothe in wareine and in waste;" if there was a bell to their collar, men would know of their coming and run away in time. Clearly, according to Mr. Manly, those beings, those "segges," are dogs, and C made a grievous mistake in supposing them men; he cannot therefore be the author of B.

But in reality they *were* men. C made no mistake, and, on the contrary, improved the passage. The allusions were incoherent in B. What were those beings, living in London, roaming in warrens, and wearing collars, whom if a bell were added to their collars, *men* would be able to avoid?

Men myzte wite where thei went · and awei renne.

The author of C very justly felt that the passage should be made clearer; he had, of course, never intended really to mean dogs (from which people are not accustomed to run away) but men, those very "knyztes and squiers" whom he now names for our clearer understanding, and who had taken then to wearing costly gold collars—a well-known fashion of the period—being themselves the very sort of "segges" the poorer people might have reason to fear. He therefore names them and no one else, and is careful to suppress the allusion in B to their appearing so adorned "in wareine and in waste." There was no "misunderstanding" on the part of C; just the reverse; and he deserves thanks instead of blame.

Considering this version as a whole, Professor Manly describes the author as having been, so it seems to him, "a man of much learning, true piety, and of genuine interest in the welfare of the nation, but unimaginative, cautious, and a very pronounced pedant." This amounts to saying, as everybody will agree, that C is the work of an older man than A and B, which simply confirms the point of view I defend. Increasing piety, more care for politics, more cautiousness, less imagination, a greater show of learning (in the last edition he gave of his *Essays*, Montaigne added about two hundred Latin quotations<sup>1</sup>) are so many characteristics of age, none of them implying a difference of authorship.

<sup>1</sup> P. Villey, *Les sources des Essais de Montaigne*, Paris, 1908, Vol. I, p. 402.

It is an untoward circumstance for Mr. Manly's theory that his successive writers seem to have been each one older than his predecessor, just as if the same man had been living to revise his own work.

Concerning the textual changes and additions in C, Mr. Manly declares that "they are numerous and small, and not in pursuance of any well-defined plan. There are multitudinous alterations of single words and phrases, sometimes to secure better alliteration, sometimes to get rid of an archaic word, sometimes to modify an opinion, but often for no discoverable reason, and occasionally resulting in positive injury to the style or the thought" (p. 30). Precisely; and this is what an author, in the evening of life, would do for his own work and what no one else would; a reviser would have undertaken the work for some cause and with "a well-defined plan." At times, says Professor Manly, "one is tempted to think that passages were rewritten for the mere sake of rewriting." Just so, and who, except the author himself, would take so much trouble? An absolutely parallel case is offered by no less a man than Ronsard, who revised his whole works and gave one last edition of them in 1584 the year before his death. The changes introduced by him are of such a nature that they can be described as follows: "There are multitudinous alterations of single words and phrases, sometimes to secure better [cadence], sometimes to get rid of an archaic word, sometimes to modify an opinion, but often for no discoverable reason, and occasionally resulting in positive injury to the style or the thought," this latter mishap being far more frequent with Ronsard than with Langland, and, the friends of the French poet deploring, in his own day, his unfortunate changes.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Manly considers that the author of C shows not only more pedantry in increasing the number of quotations, but more learning: "C is a better scholar than either the continuator of A (who translated *non mecaberis* by 'slay not' and *tabesecham* by 'I said nothing') or B (who accepted without comment the former of these errors)." One might well answer that there is nothing extraordinary in a student knowing more in his later years than

<sup>1</sup> See, e. g., Pasquier, *Recherches de la France*, Book VI, chap. vii.



in his youth. But, in reality, scholarship is here out of the question, and the utmost that can be said, in view of the knowledge displayed everywhere else by the same writer, is that when he wrote *meeaberis* and *tabescebam*, the analogy of sounds evoked in his mind the thought of *mactabis* and *tacebam*. Revising his text he noticed one of these *misprints* and forgot the other; but he noticed that one too in his next edition and corrected it: exactly what could be expected from a poet, who draws, in version A, two lists of the Seven Sins, both wrong, and corrects them when writing B, adding, however, in this version another list of the Seven Sins, equally wrong. It cannot certainly be pretended that our author was a man of minute accuracy, for, as Mr. Skeat has observed, "he cites St. Matthew when he means St. Luke, and St. Gregory when he means St. Jerome,"<sup>1</sup> which is worse than to have left uncorrected, or even to have written, *tabescebam* instead of *tacebam* and *Fals* instead of *Favel*. If one of the versions had shown minute accuracy throughout, that would have told, in a way, for the theory of multiple authorship; but we find nothing of the kind, and the last list of the Seven Sins is left in C definitively wrong.

## VIII

Such is, as I take it, the truth concerning the supposed differences between the three versions. But let us, as a counter experiment, admit that it is not so, and let us accept all those differences at Professor Manly's own estimation. In order that they prove anything, experience must have shown that whenever similar ones are detected in the various revisions or the various parts of a work, a multiple authorship is certain.

To say nothing of Chaucer and of his tales of the Clerk, the Miller, and the Parson, we would have, if this theory held good, to admit that the first three acts of *Hamlet* were written by one Shakespeare, and the two last by another—an obvious fact: note the differences of merit, so much genius and so little, the glaring discrepancies between the two parts, Hamlet slim and elegant, the "mould of fashion" in the first acts, fat and asthmatic in the

<sup>1</sup> Preface of B, p. xiv (E. E. T. S.).

last; remember our being told that Hamlet has "foregone all customs of exercise" since Laertes left, and later that, since Laertes went, he has been "in continual practice;" Laertes himself, a brave and honorable young man in the first acts, a cowardly murderer at the end, and so on. As Professor Manly says concerning the separate poet to whom he attributes the second part of *A*, the author of the latter part of the play "tried to imitate the previous writer, but succeeded only superficially, because he had not the requisite ability as a writer, and because he failed to understand what were the distinctive features in the method of his model."<sup>1</sup> It even seems, at times, as if the author of the two last acts had never read the three first: dual authorship should therefore be held as more than proved.

The whole story of literature will have to be rewritten: strong doubts will be entertained whether the revised version of the *Essays* of 1588 is really by Montaigne, the differences with the former ones offering some remarkable analogies with those pointed out in *Piers Plowman*.<sup>2</sup> There will be a question as to the first part of *Don Quixote* being by the same Cervantes as the last,<sup>3</sup> and *Paradise Regained* by the same Milton as *Paradise Lost*. But this is nothing: here is a grand poem, of great originality, full of love and adventures, revealing withal the highest aims; a masterpiece received at once as such and ever since. And we have also a revision, the work obviously of a feebler hand, of a less gifted genius, a cautious man, very pedantic. All that was best and most original in the first text has been suppressed or toned down; the subject is modern, yet we now find that the character of the hero

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> In the first edition of the *Essays* (to quote an opinion not at all expressed in view of the present discussion as it dates from 1897) the thought of Montaigne "est hardie dans l'expression; elle a le ton haut et résolu de celui qui s'émancipe. Plus tard, au contraire, elle baissera la voix, comme on la baisse pour dire des choses graves dont on sait la portée." In his same last version, Montaigne "disjoint ses raisonnements, coupe le fil de ses déductions, en y intercalant des remarques étrangères; la pensée primitive se morcele ainsi et se désagrège. . . . Son livre est devenu pour Montaigne une sorte de tapisserie de Pénélope, qu'il ne défait certes pas, car il retranche peu, mais dont il relâche les mailles, y travaillant toujours sans l'achever jamais."—Paul Bonnefon, in Julléville's *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, III, 451, 468.

<sup>3</sup> "A certain undertone of melancholy has been perceived in his second part. . . . At whiles he moralis[e]s with that touch of sadness natural to a man of many years and trials, for whom life is only a retrospect."—Jas. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, Introduction to his reprint of Shelton's translation of *Don Quixote*, London, 1896, Vol. III, p. xxiv.

has been so remodeled as to recall Achilles; other personages are so modified as to resemble Hector, Nestor, Patrocles. Here are indeed differences! Yet we should be wrong in assuming that the *Gerusalemme Liberata* and the *Gerusalemme Conquistata* are the work of several Tassos.

Here is another work, and the analogy is even closer; it is an English masterpiece. It appeared in one volume, full of the most interesting and best "visualised" scenes, every incident so well presented and so true to life as to be unforgettable, the book attaining at once an immense popularity, being translated into every language, and keeping to this day its hold on readers throughout the world. We are confronted with two continuations. The earliest is a weak imitation of the first work, the visual power has diminished; strange happenings of the usual kind are expected to make up for the lack of better qualities; it is impossible to stop reading the first part when once begun, it is difficult to read the second to its end. In the next continuation, the differences are yet deeper, the author makes faint attempts to connect his work, by allusion, with the first one, but all has become vague and allegorical; theological mists have replaced tangible realities. Afraid apparently of detection, the author of this part goes so far as to pretend that the first one was "allegorical," though also "historical": a barefaced slander on the original work. The new part is full of rambling disquisitions on man and his duties, on atheism, and on Providence, with an imaginary journey to the world of spirits and a visit to Satan: "Here, I say, I found Satan, keeping his court or camp, we may call it which we please." The conclusion of the book is, that "a great superintendency of divine Providence in the minutest affairs of this world," and the "manifest existence of the invisible world" have been demonstrated. A difference of authorship is the more obvious that there was not between the publications of these three volumes, anonymous all of them, a lapse of years allowing the author to become, so to say, a different man: it did not take two years for the three to appear.

Yet, for all that, the three were the work of the same writer, and the titles he gave to them were: *Life and strange surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*—*Farther Adventures of Robinson*

*Crusoe—Serious Reflections . . . of Robinson Crusoe, with his Vision of the Angelick World.* The first part appeared in 1719, the last in 1720. Shall we have to believe in three different Defoes?

## IX

I mentioned at the outset that all the indications in the MSS, whether titles of the different parts, colophons, or notes added by former-day owners, agreed in showing that we had to do with a single work, the work of a single author; none to the contrary being discernible. One more connecting link between the three versions remains to be noticed.

At various places in each, and with more abundance as time passed, the author gave some details about himself, his train of thoughts, and his manner of life. All these details are simple, plain, clear, most of them of no interest whatever, if untrue; they are not meant to show the poet to advantage, but have, on the contrary, often the tone of a confession: *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. Localities are mentioned with a precision and definiteness unequalled in the ample dream-literature of that period, where poets usually go to sleep by the side of an anonymous brook, in a nameless country. Here two regions, one a very unusual one in poetry, are named so as to draw special attention, Malvern with her hills, her mists, and the vast plain at the foot of the slopes; London, with its cathedral of many chantries, its great people wearing bright collars, its poorer ones in their "cots," its principal thoroughfares and suburbs, Cornhill, Cheapside, Cock Lane, Garkickhithe, Tyburn, Southwark, Shoreditch, where lives "dame Emme," Westminster with the king's palace and the law courts. The allusions to Welshmen confirm the inference that Malvern is not a name chosen at random, as the author expresses such ideas as would occur to a man of the Welsh border. They are natural in such a one, and would be much less so in a Kentish or Middlesex man. There is in Chaucer one mention of Wales: it is to describe it as the refuge of Christians during the period of the old-time invasions:

To Walis fled the cristianitee.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Man of Law*, l. 446.

Gower mentions Wales, but only to say that it was the place from which came the bishop who baptized King Allee.<sup>1</sup>

All those personal notes, scattered in versions belonging, as everybody acknowledges, to dates far apart, accord quite well one with another. If Mr. Manly's four anonymous authors are responsible for them, they showed remarkable cleverness in fusing into one their various personalities, to the extent even of growing more talkative, "cautious," and "pedantic," as years passed, so as to convey the impression of the same man growing older—the more meritorious, too, as the taking-up of somebody else's work to revise it, is rarely a task assumed at the end of one's life, so that the chances are that the supposed reviser of C was not an old man; yet he cleverly assumed Eld's habits and ways of speech.

Not only do the tone of the work and the nature of the additions denote that B was written by an older man than A, and C by an older man than B, but the fact is expressly stated in the course of the private confidences added in each version. At the beginning of passus XII in B, Ymagynatyf, besides telling us that the author has followed him "fyve and fourty wyntre" (which one is free to take literally or not), specifies that the poet is no longer young, and that he has reached middle age, though not yet old age. I have often moved thee to think of thy end, says Ymagynatyf,

And of thi wyldre wantounesse · tho thou ȝonge were,  
To amende it in thi myddel age · lest miȝte the faylled  
In thyne olde elde.<sup>2</sup>

In C, written many years later, the "fyve and fourty wyntre," which could no longer be even approximately true, are replaced by the vague expression "more than fourty wynter," and in the long and very interesting passage, reading like a sort of memoirs, added at the beginning of passus VI, the author speaks of himself as "weak," and of his youth as being long passed :

"Whanne ich ȝong was," quath ich · "meny ȝer hennes. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Confessio Amantis*, II, l. 904.

<sup>2</sup> B, XII, 6. "Concupiscentia Carnis" had told him, it is true : "Thow art ȝonyge and ȝepe and hast ȝeres ynowe" (XI, 17). But this occurs in a passage where Fortune shows to the author, in a mirror called "myrdler" (earth or the world), an allegory of man's whole life ; it is therefore preserved in C. It may also be observed that it agrees with the character of "Concupiscentia Carnis" to speak thus to men of *any* age.

<sup>3</sup> C, VI, 35.

How extraordinary is such minute care, in four different anonymous authors, who cannot have acted in concert, as each must have died to allow the other to do his revising unimpeded! such minute care, in order to give the impression of only one man revising his own work as he lived on, and grew older!—much less extraordinary, and therefore more probable, if the whole was, as I believe, the work of the same writer.

Not only do the personal intimations scattered in the three versions fit well together, but they fit such a man as would have composed such a poem, a man of enthusiasm and despondency, of a great tenderness of heart, in spite of a gaunt exterior and blunt speech, a man of many whims which he may occasionally have obeyed,<sup>1</sup> only to feel afterward the pangs of remorse, as if he had committed real crimes; describing himself then in the worst colors, and, what is well worthy of notice, giving throughout the impression of one who would attempt much in the way of learning without reaching complete proficiency in any branch, of one with an ungeometrical sort of mind, who could let many errors slip in the midst of his grand visions, pregnant sayings, vague dreams, and vain disquisitions. Nothing is more characteristic than the description of himself he attributes to Clergie in the very first version of the poem :

The were lef to lerne · but loth for to stodie.<sup>2</sup>

In a line added in B, he makes Holy Church recall his lack of steady zeal :

To litel latyn thow lernedest · lede, in thi 3outh.<sup>3</sup>

He describes himself elsewhere as “franky of wittes.”

On this, Mr. Manly limits himself to stating briefly that all such details must be imaginary, and he refers us to Prof. Jack who “has conclusively proved” that all these indications were fictitious. “Were any confirmation of his results needed, it

<sup>1</sup> Coveytyse-of-eyes · cam offer in mynde  
Than Dowel of Dobet · amonge my dedes alle.  
Coveytise-of-eyes · comforted me ofte,  
And seyde, “have no conscience · how thow come to gode.”

—B, XI, 49.

<sup>2</sup> A, XII, 6.

<sup>3</sup> B, I, 139; not in A; preserved in C.

might be found in the fact that the author gives the name of his wife and daughter as Kitte and Kalote . . . typical names of lewd women, and therefore not to be taken literally as the names of the author's wife and daughter" (p. 34).

But if those names had such a meaning that part of the poem would be unintelligible anyway, whoever the author be. Those names appear in the splendid passage where the poet is awakened by the bells on Easter morn :

And kallyd Kytte my wyf · and Kalote my doughter,  
 ' A-rys, and go reverence · godes resurreccioun,  
 And creop on kneos to the croys · and cusse hit for a juwel,  
 For goddes blesside body · hit bar for oure bote.'<sup>1</sup>

To say that those names are the invention of a reviser is no explanation. Why should a reviser choose them, if they had such a meaning, and what can be his intention in showing himself, at this solemn moment, surrounded with such a disreputable family? The truth is that the opprobrious meaning thus attributed to these names at that date is a mere assumption in support of which no proof is being adduced. Names for which such a bad fate is in store always begin by being honorable; then comes a period during which they are used in the two senses; then arrives the moment of their definitive doom. The parallel French word *catin*, derived like Kitte from Catherine, was for a long time a perfectly honorable word; the second period began for it at the Renaissance; but then, and for a great many years, it was used both ways. It appears with the meaning of a strumpet in Marot :

Une catin, sans frapper a la porte,  
 Des cordeliers jusqu'en la cour entra.<sup>2</sup>

But the same word is used to designate the Queen of France in one of the eclogues of Ronsard : *Catin* stands there for Catherine de Médicis.<sup>3</sup> The same name again is employed much later by Madame Deshoulières as an honorable proper name, and by Madame de Sévigné as an infamous substantive.

<sup>1</sup> C, XXI, 473 ; B, XVIII, 426.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Janet, Vol. III, p. 105 ; pointed out by Paul Meyer.

<sup>3</sup> Eclog. I, first speech of the "Premier Pasteur Voyageur." Elizabeth of France, daughter of Catherine and of Henri II, is there described as "fille de Catin."

As for *Kalote*, supposing *callet* to be really derived from it, it should be noted that the oldest example quoted in Murray's Dictionary of *callet* being used to designate "a lewd woman, trull, strumpet, drab," is of about 1500.

Except for this, we are referred, as I have said, to Prof. Jack, stated to have "conclusively proved" that nothing was genuine in the personal allusions scattered throughout *Piers Plowman*. As a matter of fact, Prof. Jack did nothing of the kind. He assumes at the start, in his essay,<sup>1</sup> the thoroughly skeptical attitude which is nowadays all the fashion. James I of Scotland, we were recently told, did not write the *Kingis Quhair*; Sir Philip Sidney was never in love with anybody, and his poems are literary exercises; he himself says they were not, and even names with marked animosity the husband of the lady; but that does not matter; we are not such fools and we know better. Shakespeare's dark woman never existed at all; he invented her to have the pleasure of drawing her edifying portrait. As for *Piers Plowman*, the author lets us understand that he made the very sort of studies that one must have made to write such a poem; he tells us that certain ecclesiastical functions allowed him to eke out a scant livelihood; that it happened to him to live in Malvern and in London, etc. Nonsense, all that; how could one believe that he really lived anywhere?

Yet, he probably did; poets are not bound to be always deceitful; their own private experience and real feelings are, after all, the subject-matter readiest of access to them. Why should they ever go such a long way to invent, when it would be so easy for them to copy? Of course, when they tell us tales of wonder, or of events markedly to their advantage, we should be on our guard; but when they plainly state plain facts, of small interest if untrue, contradicted by no document and by no historical fact, the chances are that they speak from experience, the personal element in the statement being precisely what makes it seem interesting to them. We are not bound to believe that a real eagle carried to the House of Fame, beyond the spheres, such a precious and consid-

<sup>1</sup> "The Autobiographical Elements in *Piers the Plowman*," in the *Journal of Germanic Philology*, Bloomington (Ind.), Vol. III, 1901, No. 4.



erable load as was our friend Chaucer. But when the same Chaucer describes himself as going home after having made his "rekenynges," and reading books until his sight is "dasewyd,"<sup>1</sup> we should be quite wrong in displaying here any of our elegant skepticism: for it so happens that documentary evidence corroborates the poet's statements, and authentic records tell us of the sort of "rekenynges" the poet had to attend to, and the kind of work which would impair his sight.

Why believe, says Prof. Jack, that our author was, in any way, connected with Malvern? He names those hills, it is true, but "of these he gives us no description." Why should he? He may have had some "personal acquaintance with London," but "certainly we cannot affirm that he ever lived there or even ever saw it."<sup>2</sup>

Well may one be skeptical about such skepticism. When, in the course of a work of the imagination, among fancy cities and real ones, we find the absolutely uncalled-for sentence: "Se transporte à Chinon, ville fameuse, voire première du monde," we should be wrong to suppose that this name has been put there at random; for the city was the birthplace of the author of the work, Rabelais. When, in the same work, we find that Pantagruel "estoit logé à l'Hostel saint Denis" in Paris, nothing would be more natural, it seems, than to suppose the name to be a chance one. Closer scrutiny has recently shown that the Hostel Saint Denis belonged to the abbot of St. Denis, and housed Benedictine monks who came to Paris to study. Rabelais was a member of the order, and must have frequented this same hostel at some of his stays in Paris, hence his choice.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing more elegant, to be sure, than skepticism. Yet it should not be carried too far, for fear of hard facts giving the lie to its fancies. What more airy being than Ronsard's Cassandre, with the conventional praise of her perfections, sonnet after sonnet embodying ideas, similes, and eulogies which had done duty numberless times

<sup>1</sup> *House of Fame*, II, 145, 150.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 406, 413.

<sup>3</sup> H. Clouzot, *Modern Language Review*, July, 1908, p. 404.

from the days of Laura if not even earlier? Yet this typical creature of a poet's brain has just turned out to have been a real woman, and to have been such as Ronsard described her, with dark eyes and complexion, living at Blois, and bearing in real life the romantic and unusual name of Cassandre, for she was Cassandra Salviati, of Italian parentage.

Prof. Jack seems to have himself felt some misgivings, for which credit should be accorded him. After having started on such lines that he was nearing apace the conclusion that *Piers Plowman* had grown somehow, without having been written by any man who might have led any sort of life anywhere; after having taken the unnecessary trouble to investigate whether the author did actually sleep and have the dreams he speaks of (an investigation of the carrying capacities of Chaucer's eagle would be welcome); and after also undertaking to refute the opinion, advanced by no one, that Langland was "a professional wanderer" and "spent his life in roaming about," Prof. Jack comes to terms. And his terms are not so very unacceptable after all. He admits, as "quite probable, that in this satirical picture of the clergy of that day the poet also had in mind the struggles by which he himself rose, and was at that moment rising, above the low moral level of the churchmen about him;" that the statements concerning his being nicknamed Long Will, living in Cornhill, etc., "may be true;" that we may find "between the lines" in the poem "valuable hints for drawing a rough sketch of his life;" that he himself, Prof. Jack, should "not be understood as denying to it all autobiographical elements; the opinions, hopes, and fears of the author are surely here."<sup>1</sup> This is enough to enable us to maintain that Prof. Jack has not "conclusively proved" the autobiographical details in the poem to be "not genuine, but mere parts of the fiction." He has not, and does not pretend that he has.

So long as no positive text or fact contradicts the plain statements in the poem, we hold ourselves entitled to take them for what they are given, and to consider, at the very least, that the sum of accessible evidence favors our views rather than others' skepticism.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 410, 412, 413, 414.

We persist therefore in adhering to our former faith, and in rejecting the hypothesis of the four or five authors revising one single work, each taking care to write as if he was an older man than his predecessor, leaving behind him nothing else in the same style, and dying, each in succession, to make room for the next. We hold that the differences in merit, opinions, dialect, etc., do not justify a belief in a difference of authorship, and that the shifted passage so cleverly fitted in by C at its proper place, far from hurting our views, confirms them. We believe, in a word, that, as we read in one of the MSS, "William Langland made Pers Ploughman."

Before coming to an end, however, I must repeat that, strongly as I dissent from Prof. Manly's conclusions, my gratitude toward him for his discovery, and my sympathy for the sincerity and earnestness of his search, equal those of any other student. It is certainly difficult to enjoy better company than Professor Manly's on the road leading to the shrine of "St. Treuth."

J. J. JUSSERAND

WASHINGTON

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Prof. J. M. Manly's Answer to Dr. Jusserand.

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## THE AUTHORSHIP OF *PIERS PLOWMAN*

Second only to the good fortune of having Mr. Jusserand as an ally in my investigation of the *Piers the Plowman* poems is that of having him as an opponent. When he and I first discussed my views in conversation some three years ago I cherished the hope that even the brief expository sketch of them in the *Cambridge Hist. of Engl. Lit.* might induce him to adopt the theory as to authorship which a careful study of the poems in many aspects had caused me to form. He had long ago recognized many of the difficulties presented by the poems and had explained them by a highly ingenious and poetical conception of a very complex and self-contradictory personality for the author. It seemed to me a result that might be hoped as well as desired that the additional difficulties disclosed by my discussion should lead him to recognize, as I had felt obliged to do, that the right solution of the problems of the poems lay in their multiple authorship. But this was not to be. My presentation of my views, unpolemical as I tried to make it, has served only to confirm his previous views, and convince him more strongly than ever of their validity. But disappointed as I am of my cherished hope, I have the satisfaction—a real satisfaction to one who is only desirous that we shall reach the truth in this inquiry—of knowing that if my views can support the vigorous and skilful attack made by Mr. Jusserand, no doubt as to their truth can remain in the mind of anyone.

Mr. Jusserand's discussion is, as all who are familiar with his work knew it would be, a masterpiece of persuasive eloquence. In addition to this, the special issues are met and discussed in the middle part of his paper with a dexterity that must have been convincing to every reader who contented himself with being a passive reader only and gave no active personal investigation to the evidence and arguments adduced. Moreover, the whole order and arrangement of parts is skilfully devised to

break such force as the arguments of the adversary may have when properly massed and valued.

How then is this formidable attack to be met? It would seem the part of wisdom to avoid the order and method of discussion chosen by one's opponent, but I shall, in replying to Mr. Jusserand, undertake no detours, execute no flank movements, but, as nearly as I can, meet his onset at every point and discuss the question in the order chosen by him. I shall do this, because I am confident of the truth and strength of my position and because the reader will thus most easily assure himself that the attack really has been met successfully at every point and that the success is not a success of dialectical dexterity, but of sound reasoning. Let us then proceed to the discussion of Mr. Jusserand's arguments in the order in which he has developed them.

## I

First, he begins with a celebration of the merits of the *Piers Plowman* poems as, "next to the *Canterbury Tales*, the greatest literary work produced by England during the Middle Ages," accents the unique democracy of *Piers the Plowman* and contrasts its vivid interest in internal reforms with the singular indifference of Chaucer to such matters and his singular lack of national feeling. With the praise of the poems I am in most thorough and hearty accord; indeed, as I have elsewhere said, I regard them as having even greater merits and greater significance than has hitherto been allowed. In addition to the remarkable poetic eloquence of the author of the B text, which has always been recognized, I recognize a clearness of vision and a capacity for artistic and orderly development of ideas on the part of the author of the first part of the A text, which had, previous to my first article on the subject, been generally overlooked. And I maintain that the social and political significance of the work of several men of notable intellectual power, and of ideas and aims of the same general tendency (notwithstanding individual differences), is far greater than that of a solitary, though powerful voice. With the implied criticism of Chaucer—as it has no bearing upon the subject under discussion—I will



not deal here, but may return to it another day, to point out that Alain Chartier, in giving his reasons for not admitting political discussion to his poetry but reserving it for prose, may possibly furnish a clue to Chaucer's supposed indifference.

Great, however, as is the significance of *Piers the Plowman*, it seems to me not to possess precisely the traits ascribed to it by Mr. Jusserand. It is undoubtedly "thoroughly English," but to say that "of foreign influences on it there are but the faintest traces" seems to me an exaggeration. It is on the contrary full of evidences of influences from both French and Latin literature, most of which, to be sure, have been overlooked. And when, in order to establish unity of authorship for the poems, Mr. Jusserand represents them as containing absolutely unique democratic ideas, he seems to me to be going a little too far. "The equivalent of such a line," says he, "as the following one on the power of king, nobles and commons:

Knyghthood hym ladde,  
 Might of the comunes' made hym to regne,

can be found nowhere in the whole range of mediæval literature; it has but one real equivalent (inaccessible then to the public)—the Rolls of Parliament" (p. 2). That the official records of parliamentary discussion and action were not then accessible to the public is undeniable, but are we asked to believe that Parliament had some esoteric doctrine, some high ideals of government kept secret from the people? Is it not, rather, true that the prevalence in Parliament of doctrines similar to that of the fine lines Mr. Jusserand has quoted is proof—not presumptive, but positive—that they were commonly and widely held among the people of England? What legislative body in the history of the world has ever preceded the advanced thinkers of its time in the formulation of social and political ideals? Indeed, are not such ideals commonly at least a generation old before they can possibly be available for practical politics? We may assume, then, without danger of error, that the views held by Parliament were commonly held and discussed among intelligent Englishmen at the time when the *Piers Plowman* poems were written; and Mr. Jusserand has abundantly shown, in his brilliant and learned book on the poems, the kinship

of these views to the lines quoted. How could it be otherwise? Had not the people of England given practical expression to such views more than once in dealing with their kings, and most notably in dealing with the ill-fated Edward II? Such views had, furthermore, found theoretical expression even outside of England. Unquestionably the most famous political writer of the continent in the first half of the fourteenth century was Marsiglio of Padua, and his *Defensor Pacis* was his best-known work—world famous, indeed. This book is not immediately at hand as I write, so I will quote from the summary of it given by Loserth, *Geschichte des späteren Mittelalters* (p. 274): “Im Volke ruht die Quelle aller Gewalten, in seinen Händen liegt die Gesetzgebung, und der Regent ist nur sein vollziehendes Werkzeug. Er ist dem Volke verantwortlich und daher auch absetzbar.” And such views were expressed abundantly by the political writers of the time. The unique merit of England lies in having put such ideas into practice hundreds of years before other nations did more than talk about them.

But the lines quoted by Mr. Jusserand demand one word more, for it may be alleged that their special feature—the point that distinguishes them from such utterances as those of Marsiglio—is emphasis of the power of the Commons. If so, one may detect a difference in attitude between the texts of the poems. I will not insist upon the fact that no such sentiments appear anywhere in the A text; but I cannot refrain from pointing out that C was, for some reason, dissatisfied with these noble lines. In C the passage runs (C, I, 139 ff.):

Thanne cam ther a kyng: Knyghthod hym ladde,  
 The muche myghte of the men' made hym to regne;  
 And thanne cam Kynde Witte' and clerkus he made,  
 And Conscience and Kynde Wit' and Knyghthod tegederes  
 Caste that the Comune' sholde hure comunes fynde.

The function of the Commons is no longer political but purely industrial; they are to provide food for the rest of the community. Shall it be said that l. 140 was changed, not because of any difference of view on the part of the writer, but only in order to secure better alliteration? Was, then, this pioneer of advanced

thought, as Mr. Jusserand will have him, ready to sacrifice his most distinctive idea merely in order to avoid accenting *comunes* on the second syllable—an accentuation common and legitimate, though possibly a little antiquated? I think not. In fact to insist over much upon the democracy of this passage is to read into it very modern ideas, just as the democracy of *Magna Charta* was until recently overstated. Even in the B text the two lines following those quoted by Mr. Jusserand give the same conception of the function of the Commons as is given in C, and in almost the same words; and when, a few lines later the Angel warned the King, he spoke in Latin in order that the uneducated should not understand:—

And sithen in the eyre an heigh' an angel of hevene  
Lowed to speke in Latin — for lewed men ne coude  
Jangle ne jugge' that justifie hem shulde,  
But suffren and serven.

The political and social views of these poems were, indeed, common views of Englishmen of that day; as Mr. Jusserand himself says, "he [the author] is not above his time, but of it."

In view of Mr. Jusserand's insistence upon the author's constant devotion to his poem and to social reform as evidence of unity of authorship, we may note in passing a feature that is certainly very hard to explain if these poems be, as Mr. Jusserand supposes, the work of a single author who took it "for his life's companion and confidant, adding new parts or new thoughts as years pass on and as events put their impress on his mind" (p. 3). The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 finds absolutely no record in the poems. Did this event, certainly the most notable as well as the most picturesque in the social history of England during the lifetime of the author, "put no impress" upon the mind of the man whose principal concern was "the great political movements, the general aspirations of the people;" who kept a copy of his poem constantly before him for the purpose of adding to it such thoughts and emotions as the changing events of the time gave him? The usual reply to such questions is, I know, that the A and B texts were written years before the Revolt occurred and the C text when it had already become ancient history. But obviously this

is an inadequate reply, if Mr. Jusserand's conception of the author and his mode of work is correct, for it immediately suggests the query, But why did he write nothing at this most stirring time? Why did he who, by the hypothesis, was ever making additions to his work, additions involving often only the insertion of single lines here and there, and whose MS was copied in all stages of incompleteness—why did he have no word of encouragement or of criticism for the revolutionists, of blame for the excesses charged upon them, or of chiding for the king upon his unfulfilled promises? Was he moved by none of these things, or was he alone in England ignorant of them?

Mr. Jusserand next wishes to prepare the way for his later discussion of the lost or misplaced leaf and the author's failure to notice it and set it right in the B text. To do this he attempts to establish for his author a character for carelessness and indifference concerning the condition in which his poem was published which is, to say the least, remarkable for a man whose life-work it was. Authors who subject their work to continual revision and amplification proceed always in the same way, says Mr. Jusserand. "The emendations or additions in the already written text are crammed into the margin or written on slips or fly-leaves. . . . It is not always easy to see where those modifications should come in." Such MSS have come down to us from the Middle Ages, and the inability of Montaigne's editors to find the proper places for the additions which he had scribbled in the margin of a copy of his 1588 edition or on loose slips and fly-leaves is cited as a notable example of the dangers of this mode of revision. "Superabundant proofs may be given that the author of *Piers Plowman* wrote his revisions in a similar way, handing, however, to less careful people (professional scribes) material requiring more care" (pp. 3 f.). All of this (substituting authors for author) might be cheerfully admitted without at all affecting the point at issue, for we have abundant proofs that men who were not the original authors of the works which they revised sometimes made their additions and revisions in the same way, and it is an old story in textual criticism that such additions, and even glosses and comments not intended as a part of the text, often found their way into the text when the

MS was recopied. It is a far cry from the establishment of such additions to the assumption of a single author.

Let us, however, examine the arguments a little more closely, for they deserve it. In the first place, a notable difference between the case of Montaigne's *Essais* and that of these poems is that Montaigne was dead when his friends prepared the edition in question for the press, whereas, according to Mr. Jusserand's hypothesis, the author of these poems was alive and constantly occupied with his text. Who can doubt that if Montaigne had lived to carry this new edition through the press or even to complete his preparations for it, he would have found or made right places for all his additions and insertions, as he did when he printed the edition of 1588 with many insertions and expansions in the first two books, which had been published in 1580? Digressions he would of course have permitted, for digressions were his specialty, but misplacements, we may be sure, would not have occurred.

We may next consider these careless professional scribes to whom Langland (as we will for brevity's sake occasionally call him) "handed" his original MS in various stages of revision. I find it somewhat difficult to understand their relations to Langland. Did he, the moneyless vagabond who lived in a cot with Kitte and Kalote and eked out a meager subsistence by writing legal documents and singing for the souls of such as had helped him or were willing to give him an occasional meal—did he hire these careless professional scribes? Or were the scribes paid by other men, who had read or heard of the poem and wished copies for themselves? If the latter be assumed, what becomes of the mystery in which the author enveloped his identity and the fear which caused him to omit from the C text the famous line supposed to contain his real name (p. 9, n. 4)? In any event, would he—himself a professional scribe, who says (C, XIV, 117 ff.) the "gome" who copies carelessly is a "goky"—allow his own poems to be copied carelessly, whether the scribes were paid by himself or by his admirers? And if they were not professionals but amateurs who wished the copies for themselves—for I wish to give Mr. Jusserand's hypothesis every opportunity for justification—would not their admiration and interest have led them to ask the author

where these loose slips and fly-leaves belonged? Must we then suppose that the author himself knew nothing of the making of these copies, that Kitte and Kalote took advantage of his occasional absences in the Malvern Hills and elsewhere to issue editions of the poems in the stage of revision they happened to have reached at the time?

But it is time to examine the instances in which Mr. Jusserand thinks the author's additions and insertions were mistreated by careless scribes. Carelessness on the part of scribes we shall undoubtedly find, as was long ago pointed out by Professor Skeat, but very little evidence that the author's text was not in the first instance correctly copied. Mr. Jusserand (p. 4, n. 3) cites two<sup>1</sup> MSS of the A text (Univ. Coll. Oxf. and Rawl. Poet. 137) and one of the C (Cotton. Vesp. B XVI). The first two have "the same jumble of incoherent facts." Each is "regular down to *passus* ii, 25,<sup>2</sup> which is immediately followed (on the same page) by *passus* vii, 71-213, and then returns to l. 182 of *passus* i, some twenty lines of *passus* ii occurring twice over. It then goes down to *passus* vii, 70, when the passage which had already occurred is omitted" (Skeat quoted by Jusserand). But obviously what we have here is two MSS copied, as Professor Skeat says two lines above the passage quoted by Mr. Jusserand, "from an older and imperfect one, or still more probably from *two* [italics by Skeat] others, some of the leaves of which were out of place." The confusion was not in the author's MS, but in a later copy. That Professor Skeat is right is so immediately evident that no confirmation is needed, though it may be found abundantly in the fact that these MSS belong to a sub-group, derived from a MS which is itself derived from another which is derived from still another; and as this confusion is found only in this sub-group, it is clear that it occurred merely in the parent MS of this group and not in the author's original. The same remarks apply with slight modification to the confusion in Cotton. Vesp. B. XVI. That MS is a copy of a copy of a copy . . . of the earliest MS which can be reconstructed by the usual methods of genealogical text-criti-

<sup>1</sup>The MS at Trinity College, Dublin, has the same confusion.

<sup>2</sup>This is not quite accurate, but the inaccuracy does not affect the argument.

cism (which is not necessarily the author's original), and the confusion in question does not occur in any other of the extant MSS derived from these successive copies.

"Tentative additions written by the author on the margin or scraps," says Mr. Jusserand ". . . were inserted haphazard anywhere by some copyists and left alone by others [pp. 4 f.]. Of this sort are, to all appearances, the additional lines in MS Harl. 875 of A, not to be found elsewhere," etc. This MS does contain lines found in no other MS and a different version of some lines of the usual text, but it is clear that neither additions nor variants come from the author but are later modifications by some unskilful hand. I give a list of them marking those found in other MSS but in different form with the letter "d;" naturally I have not included scribal errors or minute variants in this list: I, 1 l. after 161, 176-77; II, 1 after 8, 1 after 9, 12 as 2 ll., 31, 34, 48, 93 d, 96, 118, 136-39, 141-43, 182, 201-2 (as 3 ll.) d; III, 19-20, 66, 91-94, 98, 180 d, 233 d, 234, 265-69 (as 3) d; IV, 154 d; V, 182, 257 d; VI, 1-2, 5, 45 d; VII, 5 d, 26, 226 d, 280 d; VIII, 46, 101, 125-26. Even Professor Skeat, who admits many of these lines into his text, says that some of them may be spurious.<sup>1</sup> The only one, in fact, for the genuineness of which serious contention could be made is VIII, 46 and, in my opinion, it is spurious, like the rest. The Ilchester MS also is cited by Mr. Jusserand as containing two versions of C, X, 75-281, one of them being, "it seems, a first cast of the other" (p. 5, n. 1). This MS is mainly a somewhat imperfect copy of the ordinary version of the C text, but at the beginning the scribe obviously had before him fragments of two texts. First we have the A text, Prol. 1-60, then the C text, X, 75-254, then A Prol. 55-76, and 80-83, then C, X, 255-81, then A Prol. 84-95, C, I, 91-152 and A Prol. 96-109; after which the usual version of C begins and runs on, with some gaps and misplacements, to the end. The two passages from C, X inserted in the A Prologue differ considerably from the usual version of these lines, which is found also in this MS at the proper place. Professor Skeat and Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the statements of Chambers and Grattan in *Mod. Lang. Rev.*, IV, 376 ff., where these and others of Mr. Jusserand's remarks concerning the A MSS are examined. Unfortunately I did not see this valuable article until my own remarks were in type.

Jusserand believe that they are a first cast of the usual version. I see no reason to believe this; they may quite as well be a later modification of C's text by some other writer—certainly the lines corresponding to C, I, 107–23, probably derived from the same source, are a variation, not a first cast. But no matter what they are, the condition of this text at the beginning shows that the scribe merely had before him an imperfect copy of the A Prologue and some odd leaves of a C text, viz., one leaf of 59 lines from C, I and four leaves from C, X.

There is no reason to believe that any of the confusions, additions or variations thus far dealt with go back to the author's copy. All the displacements of text are due to accidental displacements of the leaves of later MSS and to careless copying by later scribes. Numerous other instances occur in other MSS of these poems, and are very common in MSS of all languages and times. The only example of misplacement cited by Mr. Jusserand that really goes back to the original MS from which the others are derived, is that pointed out by me (A, VII, 71–75, B, VI, 80–84, C, IX, 80–86), where the names of the wife and children are inserted at the wrong point (but on the page to which they belong)—an error corrected by neither B nor C, although C inserted two lines (84, 85). It will be remembered that this failure of both B and C to restore these lines to their proper place was one of the reasons adduced by me for supposing that A, B, and C were not one and the same person. This bit of my ammunition does not fit Mr. Jusserand's gun and I cannot allow him to use it, even though he has been unable, as we have just seen, to procure any more. Besides, to drop the trope, it is not permissible to break the force of my original argument by separating this instance of the failure of both B and C to recognize and correct an error that had crept into the A text from the precisely similar though more striking instance in the case of the lost leaf. The two go together and are of mutual benefit and support, as will be shown below.

Before leaving this question of additions and variations in the MSS, it may be interesting to note that, even excluding the Ilchester MS (dealt with above), Rawl. Poet. 38 (supposed to



contain a revised version of the B text), and the three MSS which contain part or all of A, XII, nineteen of the remaining forty MSS contain additions or variations either peculiar to a single MS or found only in a small sub-group. It is of course impossible to present this mass of details here, but they are duly given in the Introductions and footnotes of Professor Skeat's EETS edition, and Professor Skeat himself, despite his unwillingness to part with any decent line, rightly recognizes that the additions as well as the variations are almost all spurious—he would save a few if he could. This is not only of interest in connection with the phase of Mr. Jusserand's argument which we have just discussed, but of even greater importance, as we shall see, for the general question of the possibility of larger additions and revisions by others than the original authors.

Mr. Jusserand next (p. 5) tries to support his contention that Langland allowed his MS to be copied in all stages of incompleteness by the fact that certain MSS contain less or more of the text than others. But the facts are capable of a very different interpretation. MS Harl. 875 and the Lincoln's Inn MS undoubtedly do not go beyond *passus* viii. I once thought that this fact might support my contention that the first author's work ceased with the vision of Piers the Plowman proper; but I fear it will serve neither my turn nor Mr. Jusserand's. Harl. 875 is shown, by the possession of certain errors in common with the Vernon MS, to belong to the same group as that MS and, like it, to be derived from a MS at least one remove from the source of all extant MSS of the A text. It is true that the Vernon MS might conceivably have obtained its continuation from another source, but this would be a gratuitous assumption. The Lincoln's Inn MS, at any rate, is too corrupt to be regarded as representing the author's original in any respect. Besides, to conclude from the cessation of a MS at a particular point that the author had written no more when the transcript was made is to conclude too hastily.<sup>1</sup> MS D, 4. 12 of Trin. Coll. Dublin (A text) stops with VII, 45. Are we to conclude that a transcript was made when the author had reached this point? But among the additions in this MS

<sup>1</sup>See Chambers and Grattan, *u. s.*, p. 377.

which extend the Prologue from 109 to 124 lines, says Professor Skeat (EETS ed., ii, pp. vi f., n.), there are two extra lines after l. 54 agreeing with Rawl. Poet. 137, two after l. 83 resembling B, 112, 113, and ten after l. 95 answering to B, Prol. 92-99, but in some places bearing a closer resemblance to the C text. In other words, we have here a striking instance of contamination of texts.<sup>1</sup> Again, Digby 171 (C text) ends with XVI, 65, and Professor Skeat remarks (Vol. III, p. xlv), "no more was ever written, as the next page was left blank." But the whole B text was then in existence. Are we, then, to suppose that Langland said to the scribe, "I have finished my revision of the B text only up to this point; you had better stop here?" But he might at least have let him go on with the following line of Latin and l. 66 of the text, which were left unchanged. Surely it would be rash in any of these cases to assume that the present ending of any MS represents a definite stage in composition or revision.

The MSS containing parts of *passus* xii I will discuss below in connection with John But. I must, however, here take exception to Mr. Jusserand's statement (p. 6) that we hear of Dobet and Dobest only in the B and C texts and to his further statement (p. 7) that the heading in A MSS "Incipit hic Dowel, Dobet, et Dobest," makes it clear that the author already had in mind the expansion accomplished in the B text. Although the dreamer professes to be in search only of Dowel, the discussions and definitions almost invariably include Dobet and Dobest also,<sup>2</sup> and fully justify the heading quoted.

As for the "Explicit passus secundus de dobest et incipit passus tercius" of MS Laud 656 (C text), whether it be a mistake, as Professor Skeat thinks, or an indication, as Mr. Jusserand thinks, that the scribe expected and had reason to expect another *passus*, it has, in any event, no bearing upon the question of single or multiple authorship, as consideration of the possibilities will quickly convince anyone.

"That these three versions of the *Piers Plowman* poem exist is certain," says Mr. Jusserand (p. 7); "that they were written by

<sup>1</sup> See Chambers and Grattan, *u. s.*, p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A, IX, 69 ff., 117 ff., X, 14, 85 ff., 211 ff., XI, 86 ff., 144, 177 ff., 217 ff.

someone cannot be considered a rash surmise. Of that *one* [italics mine] we know little; but that little is considered better than nothing; better than" the situation in those cases in mediaeval literature in which "we are reduced to mere surmises." The proposition that the poems were written by someone is, rightly understood, not a rash surmise. But what of the logical process by which we pass to the assumption that someone is some *one*? And after all, is it better to hold as knowledge what is only questionable hypothesis than to recognize that we are in regard to some questions reduced to mere surmises?

But, says Mr. Jusserand, for the unity of authorship of these poems and for the name of the author we have abundant evidence. In the first place, "without exception, all those titles, colophons, marginal notes, and testimonies agree in pointing to the succession of visions, forming at first 8 or 12 and lastly 23 *passus*, as being one work, having for its general title *Piers Plowman*, and written by one author" (p. 8). He quotes some headings to prove that scribes regarded the *Dowel*, *Dobet*, and *Dobest* poem as a part of the *Piers Plowman*. There was justification for these headings in the B and C texts, for *Piers Plowman* appears in these versions of *Dowel*, etc.; and there has never been any doubt that the authors of B and C treated the poems as in a certain sense forming a consecutive poem, but here, as often, Mr. Jusserand insists upon arguing concerning B and C, when the question at issue concerns the A text. The old habit of regarding A, B, and C as inseparable even for purposes of study is too strong. As a matter of fact there is no known MS of the unmixed A text which has any such indication.<sup>1</sup> Professor Skeat (EETS ed., Vol. I, pp. xxv f.) gives the titles of the *Dowel* poem in the A MSS, and remarks, "Hence it appears that there is here no thought of reckoning in the *passus* of *Dowel* as being any part of *Piers Plowman*, as was afterward done in MSS of the later types," and

<sup>1</sup> MS Harl. 3954, which has at the end of *passus* xi the colophon: "Explicit tractus [read tractatus] de perys plowman," quoted by Mr. Jusserand, is a mixture of the A and B texts, and, says Professor Skeat (EETS ed., Vol. I, p. xxiii), "I do not consider it of much value, and believe it to be frequently corrupted. . . . These [the concluding] lines are a sad jumble, and the 'praying for pers the plowmans soule' is particularly out of place, as *Piers* not the *author* of the poem but the *subject* of it."

he calls particular attention (p. xxv) to MS Douce 323, which has as the heading for *passus* x, "Primus passus in secundo libro."

"In the same fashion," says Mr. Jusserand, "all the notes found on their leaves, the allusions in the work and tradition attribute the work to a single author. Some of the notes vary as to the name or the form of the name or surname; not one implies more than one author for the whole." But does not this uncertainty as to the name suggest some doubt as to the authority with which these informants are vested? That during the fifteenth century tradition associated the name Langland (or Longland) with the poems cannot be doubted, and is not incapable of reconciliation with the name Willelmi W. recorded in four<sup>1</sup> MSS (which since they belong to the same sub-group [see Skeat, III, p. xxxvii] are only a single testimony). I see no reason to repeat here what I said about the name in *Camb. Hist. Engl. Lit.* II, 34, 35, but I will comment on a few new points made by Mr. Jusserand. And first, as to the underlining of real names in red in MS B. M. Add. 35287. This is obviously peculiar to the scribe of this MS, and, unless my memory fails me (for I have misplaced my note on this point) does not occur in the earlier part of this MS.<sup>2</sup> That the scribe should have regarded the name "long Will" as a real name is easily intelligible, but has no more significance than the well-known remark in a late hand beside the same line, B, XV, 148 in MS Laud 581: "Nota, the name of thanctour." Any reader would easily take the statement of the text at its face value and rubricate, or annotate, or (as I have previously suggested) derive from the line supposed information as to the name of the author.

But we are not done with this famous line. "If we discarded the punning intention," says Mr. Jusserand (p. 9), the line would have little enough meaning: to 'live in land' does not convey any very clear idea." Without the context it certainly does not,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Jusserand says "three;" but he overlooked MS B. M. Add. 35157, which, according to the catalogue, was unknown to Professor Skeat when he wrote.

<sup>2</sup> I have since found my note. There is no underlining in red in the first five *passus*, and no distinction as to capitalization is made between real persons and personifications. In *passus* xv *cristes*, 15, 16, *ysodorus*, 37, are neither underlined nor written in large letters; *Anima*, 23, *Animus*, 24, *memoria*, 26, *Racio*, 28, *Sensus*, 29, *Amor*, 34, are underlined in red, and *Mens*, 25, is written in large letters.

and we all owe thanks to Mr. Jusserand for calling attention to the fact that all of us have been reading the passage very carelessly—in fact, have been reading l. 148 alone. Let us remedy this at once by a careful consideration of the whole passage. Anima, in discussion with the dreamer, mentions Charity.

“What is Charite?” quod I tho. “A childissh thinge,” he seide;  
 “*Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabis in regnum celorum*;  
 Withouten fauntelte or foly· a fre, liberal wille.”  
 “Where shulde men fynde suche a frende· with so fre an herte?  
 I have lyved in londe,” quod I· “my name is Longe Wille,  
 And fonde I nevere ful Charite· bifore ne bihynde.”

—B, XV, 145-49.

What then is the relation of l. 148 to the rest of the passage? How does the mention of the author's real name emphasize the declaration that he has never found charity? Surely in no possible manner. “I have lived in land” is clear enough; it means “I have lived in this world,<sup>1</sup> I have had experience.” But the name? its significance? Surely we have here not a real name but a popular locution implying *long* experience and observation. We have here only the equivalent of B, XIV, 97, 98:

“Where woneth Charite?” quod Haukyn. “I wiste nevere in my lyve  
 Man that with hym spake; *as wyde as I have passed*.”

In America, even in the refined society of the capital, Mr. Jusserand must have learned that, when an American replies to some statement difficult to believe by saying, “I'm from Missouri, you'll have to show me,” it is not safe to infer that the speaker has ever even set foot in Missouri. For the benefit of others, it may be necessary to explain that this very common locution merely indicates that the speaker is not of a credulous nature and thinks that the matter in point requires proof; the origin of the phrase need not concern us. I know no other instance of Long Will with the meaning here suggested, but when in Heywood's *Dialogue of Proverbs* Pt. I. chap. xi, ll. 151, 152, the hard-hearted uncle replies to a petition on behalf of his penniless nephew:

<sup>1</sup>For “in londe,” cf. the quotations given in *Oxf. Eng. Dict.*, s. v. “Land,” I. 3. †d, especially: “Welawo, to longe y lyue in londe,” Sir Ferumbraas, 2793.

But for my rewarde let him be no longer taries,  
I will send it him by John Longe the carier,<sup>1</sup>

no one can suppose that the hapless young man will see the reward soon. In form the proverb is somewhat similar to, "My name is Twyford; I know nothing of the matter," Bohn's *Hand Book*, p. 62.

Mr. Jusserand cites the testimony of John Bale and calls him a man whose testimony is "of real weight." I will not insist upon the fact that Bale gives the author's name as Robert, because I think it highly probable that Bale's testimony is merely derived from the entry in MS Laud 581. "At the end of the MS," says Professor Skeat, "are the names of former owners: 'Raffe Coppinges. *Mem.* that I have lent to Nicholas Brigham the pers ploughman which I borrowed of M. Le of Addyngton.' At the top of the first page is loosely scribbled Robart Langelond borne by malverne hilles." That Bale derived much of his information from Brigham is well known to all students of Bale's *Index*; the notes just given establish a channel between Bale and MS Laud 581, in which the information may, indeed, have taken either direction. But this is by the way; the point that concerns us is that, for matters and men before his own day, Bale, though often useful, is far from trustworthy, as may be seen most easily from the absurdities in his accounts of Chaucer and Wiclif.<sup>2</sup>

## II

In Section II (p. 12) Mr. Jusserand offers to relieve me of the burden of carrying John But as one of the authors of the poems. But I neither need nor desire this relief; in fact, I find John But rather a help than a hindrance to the discussion. That he is not so important as A, A2, B, or C, I readily admit; that he was a silly scribbler, a fool, if you will, I am not prepared to deny, although I ought to point out that Mr. Jusserand (p. 12, n. 2)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Heywood, *The Fifth Hundred of Epigrammes*, No. 66, and Bohn's *Hand Book of Proverbs*, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Summarium* he says (198ro): "Galfridus Chaucer . . . Boetium de consolatione philosophiae transtulit ad filium suum Ludovicum Chaucerum." He mentions among the works of Chaucer, *Trophaeum Lombardicum*, *De principum ruina*, *Emblemata moralia*, *De curia Veneris*, *Chrysidae testamentum*, and *Chrysidae quaerimoniam*, and adds, "Ad annum humane redemptionis 1450 vixisse perhibetur sub Henrico sexto."

agrees with me that Professor Skeat was unable to distinguish John But's work from that of the continuator of A (A 2, as I call him), and that, low as one may rate the quality of But's lines, they are not properly comparable to the "lines added by scribes to make known their thirst and their joy at having finished copying *Piers Plowman*" (p. 12). John But's continuation, slight as it is, is of importance because it shows that men did not hesitate to continue or modify a text that came into their hands. And this conclusion is abundantly supported by the 19 MSS (cited above, p. 11) which contain variations and additions. In view of this evidence, it is obviously rash to assume that even important modifications like those in Ilchester and Rawl. Poet. 38 necessarily proceed from the author of B, though those in Ilchester and Rawl. Poet. 38 might be ascribed to B, without in the least obliging us to conclude that A, A 2, B, and C were one and the same person. John But, it will be remembered, wrote his conclusion of A, after the date of B, for he wrote in the reign of King Richard. That his work is signed, and the other additions anonymous, offers no difficulty. He signed out of vanity (cf. his claim that he is a poet: "for he medleth of makyng" XII, 105), and he carefully disclaims responsibility for anything but the conclusion.

But if there were three authors largely concerned in continuing these poems—John But was not *largely* concerned—"it is singular that they all chose to manifest it [their spirit] by anonymous additions to the work of someone else" (p. 13). Surely not. The reasons which induced the original author to remain anonymous, those which, according to Mr. Jusserand, induced C to cancel the too precise revelation of B, XV, 148, would induce continuators to remain anonymous. Besides we may well believe that these sincere men were interested primarily in the influence of their satire and, finding themselves in hearty sympathy, despite minor differences, with the poem as it reached them—as was the case also with multitudes who wrote not even a single line—they were glad to avail themselves of the great popularity of preceding versions for the spread of their own ideas. Such things have happened, if I mistake not, very often in the history of satire. A

very popular satire, if anonymous, is frequently, one might almost say usually, followed by a host of others professing to be by the same writer or making some use of any popular personality that may have been created by the original satirist. I need not cite modern instances; does not the author of *Mum, Sothsegger* (*Richard the Redeless*) identify himself with the author of *Piers Plowman*? Does not *Peres the Ploughmans Crede* make use of the same great name? Does not the *Ploughman's Tale* definitely claim to be by the author of the *Crede*?

"If the shadowy character of one author unseen, unmet by any contemporary, is strange, the same happening for four people concerned with the same problems would be a wonder" (p. 13). But surely not so great. They would be more elusive. They could not be recognized by any of the striking characteristics of the dreamer, since he is fictitious, whereas, as I have already said, if we have to do with a single author who describes himself, his family, and gives his name and dwelling-place, he could hardly have escaped discovery. But Mr. Jusserand thinks also that, if there were four principal authors, the intrusion of each successive one must have been resented and protested against by one or more of his predecessors; in the absence of protests, my theory requires, he thinks, that "each of these authors must have written and breathed his last with absolute punctuality, as moths lay their eggs, gasp, and die." But what right would the continuator of A have to protest against B, or B to protest against C, or C against the author of *Mum, Sothsegger*? And we hear of no protest against John But for "medling with makyng" and killing the author with undue haste, or against the persistent carelessness of the scribes, which, if Mr. Jusserand's theory be correct, must have sorely irritated the professional soul of William Langland. If death must be prayed in aid, we surely need sacrifice only one man, A, the author of the first two visions; and the high mortality of the plague in 1362, 1369, 1375-76, increases the ordinary probabilities of death for a man already of mature age in 1362, as A seems to have been. Mr. Bradley's explanation of the Robert the Robber passage seems to me, indeed, to involve the death of A before he had time to read and revise the



MS prepared from his loose sheets by the copyist; and I believe Mr. Bradley is entirely ready to admit this explanation of A's failure to correct the confusion. As will be seen later, I still regard my explanation of the confusion as more probable than his, but, like him, I do not regard the supposition of A's early death as a serious objection to his view. At any rate, there is no need to kill A 2 and B and C; and parsimony is one of the prime maxims of scientific hypothesis.

Mr. Jusserand's theory, on the other hand, seems to me to require, if I may use his figure, that the moth die or at least enter into a profound state of coma at each period of ovation and then revive to meditate another egg to be produced under the same circumstances. How else, unless we adopt the Kitte and Kalote theory suggested above, p. 8, are we to account for the fact that repeated experience of the carelessness of scribes never sufficed to induce Langland to give them oversight or aid in setting straight blunders that must have been observed by him in his continuous occupation with his poem?

### III

This section and the next are devoted to the discussion of the passage concerning Robert the Robber and some details subsidiary to it.

Before proceeding to the main question, Mr. Jusserand attempts to show that in A the *passus* devoted to the sermon of Conscience and its effects upon the multitude is so uneven in execution as to suggest that parts of it are mere "memoranda to be developed later and put there simply for the name to appear in the list." This is intended to prepare the way for the later suppositions that there was not even a memorandum made to note the place of Wrath among the Seven Sins and that the Robber passage was an insertion on a loose leaf that had the misfortune to be misplaced by the scribe and unnoticed by the author, or at least uncorrected by him, for some thirty-six years, despite the fact that, according to Mr. Jusserand, the author had at least five opportunities in the meantime to put it in its right place (see below, p. 22). Before discussing the criticisms of

this *passus*, I wish to point out that even if they held good, even if we had to conclude that this *passus* as it stands in A is sketchy and unfinished, this conclusion would leave the failure of B to notice and correct the confusion concerning Robert the Robber as much in need of explanation as before. The question is not, how did the confusion occur, but, why did not B notice and correct it? Bearing this definitely and firmly in mind, we may pause a moment to consider, in a sort of parenthesis, as it were, the criticisms of the *passus*.

They concern principally "Lechour" and "Sloth," though Pride is dealt with quite as briefly. One may undoubtedly feel regret that we have no such portraits of the representatives of these sins or of Wrath (omitted entirely) as we have of Envy, Covetise, and Glotoun; but, before criticizing the poet for their absence, we ought to inquire whether he had not an artistic purpose in this difference of treatment. Such a purpose is, I think, not difficult to discover for Pride and Lechour. To put it briefly, the author wished to communicate to us a sense of the *immediate* and powerful effects of the preaching of Conscience. That we do receive such an impression is undeniable, and observation of our emotions as we read will show, it seems to me, that the brevity of the statements in regard to Wille, Pernel, and Lechour, is no small element in the production of this impression. Having secured this effect, the poet is at liberty to develop Envy and the rest with greater breadth and fulness. As for Sloth, if my theory of the "lost leaf" is correct, it is possible that this loss has deprived us of a few lines of his confession, as, in my opinion, it clearly has of the conclusion of Envy.

"There is [in the case of Lechour] no confession at all," and "the privation he mentions . . . leaves him a margin for many sins, especially his favorite one" (p. 15). But no confession, in the technical sense, was intended. In the case of Pride and Lechour, we have only sudden outcries of guilty souls pleading for mercy and promising amendment. The temperance of Lechour and the hair shirt of Pernel (p. 30) are not at all in the nature of penance, they are remedies against the besetting sins. The hair shirt is a well-known remedy against pride, a reducer to humility

of the rebellious flesh; and in the *Parson's Tale* we read (§82): "Another remedie agayns Lecherie is specially to withdrawen swiche thinges as yeve occasion to thilke vileinye: as ese, etinge and drinkinge; for certes, whan the pot boyleth strongly, the best remedie is to withdrawe the fyr." The only other remedies mentioned in the *Parson's Tale* are continence itself and eschewing the company of the tempter. Our poet, putting into the mouth of Lechour a brief outcry of guilt and repentance, allows him that remedy which, according to mediaeval theory, was the best "whan the pot boyleth strongly."

This brings us to Mr. Jusserand's discussion of the Robert the Robber passage. The situation is briefly this: all are agreed that A, V, 236-59 are a source of confusion as they stand, and that an error of some sort has occurred. I observed that another error occurred in the same *passus* in the omission of Wrath from the Seven Sins, and finding that a single supposition, that of the loss of the next to the innermost pair of leaves of a quire, would completely account for both errors, I proposed this as the simplest explanation. Mr. Bradley, reviewing my theory, agreed with me in regard to the existence of the two errors, but thought it more probable that the faults occurred before the poem was put into regular form, and suggested that the copyist to whom the author's loose papers were handed for transcription lost those containing the confession of Wrath and misplaced that containing the Robert the Robber passage. Mr. Jusserand holds that the author forgot to write a confession of Wrath and that the Robert the Robber passage was a later addition written on a loose slip which the copyist inserted at the wrong place. His theory no less than Mr. Bradley's or mine requires him to account for the singular failure of B to remedy the confusion caused by the Robert the Robber passage. This, it will be remembered, is the crucial point in this argument. And I think I may also fairly insist that the notable failure of both B and C to notice the confusion caused by the misplacement of the name passage<sup>1</sup> (A, VII, 71-75; B, VI, 80-84;

<sup>1</sup> It has been generally assumed that these four or five lines (for it is difficult to say whether the passage includes only 71-74 or 71-75), since they appear in all MSS, are the work of A. That they were written in the margin of the ancestor of all extant MSS is certain, but they do not sound to me like A's work and I do not feel sure that they were not written in

C, IX, 80–86), which Mr. Jusserand disposes of lightly in a footnote on p. 5, must also be dealt with seriously as tending, like these other instances, to show that B and C were not the same man as A.

Before we proceed, however, to examine Mr. Jusserand's attempt to explain B's failure to place the Robert the Robber passage where it belonged, let us note a curious feature in his theory as to how it came to be misplaced. "It has all the appearance of an afterthought," written on a loose slip, "which Adam Scrivener of sleepy pen would copy anywhere" (p. 18). Was Adam then, so sleepy that he could not see that lines 236–41 could not possibly be attached to Sloth and yet so wide awake that he rewrote the first line, as being unsuitable to the connection—if Mr. Jusserand (p. 22, n. 2) is right—changing "He highte *ȝyvan ȝeld aȝeyn*" to "And *ȝit I-chulle ȝelden aȝeyn*"?

The misplacement having occurred, Mr. Jusserand continues: "For what concerns the author himself, maybe, while making so many changes in so many places he never paid any attention to this passage (in which as a matter of fact he introduced no change at all); maybe also he thought of transferring it to its proper place and neglected to mark it accordingly or to see that the removal was made" (p. 18). A general supposition of carelessness or neglect is perhaps always plausible, but the special circumstances of this case render both of the suppositions just quoted highly improbable. Let us see.

In the first place, this is a book to the composition and revision of which, according to hypothesis, the author devoted his life. Copies of his work were made from time to time; at least five copies, if Mr. Jusserand is right, before the author corrected this glaring error. Five I say, and I emphasize it. After the original MS containing only the first eight *passus* of A (p. 5), (then the version represented by the Lincoln's Inn MS with its peculiar readings?), then that represented by Harl. 875 with its added lines (p. 5, n. 1), then an eleven *passus* version (p. 5), then a version with a part of a twelfth *passus* (p. 6), then the B text,

the MS by some one else after it left the hands of A. The authorship of the lines of course has no bearing upon the question of the identity of A, A 2, B, and C.

then the revision of B represented by Rawl. Poet. 38 (p. 5, n. 2). Whatever may be thought of the importance of the variations in some of these MSS, each new copy, if derived, as Mr. Jusserand supposes, from the author's copy, at least offered an opportunity for correcting the error. But, says Mr. Jusserand, the author made no changes in this passage, the two lines omitted by B were omitted by a mere scribal oversight. The oversight must, then, have occurred in a copy made for B's personal use, for it appears in all the copies or versions derived from B—in the ordinary version of B, in the revised text of Rawl. Poet. 38, in the preliminary C text of the Ilchester MS, and in the ordinary C text. And either the author or the scribe made other changes in the passage in the B text; thus in A, 241 we read:

I schal seche seynt Treuthe<sup>r</sup> er I seo Rome,  
and in B, 468:

I shal seke treuthe arst<sup>r</sup> ar I se Rome;

in A, 243, all the MSS have "wher-with," in B, 470, all have "wher-of;" in A, 250, all the MSS have "red," in B, 475, all have "reddere;"<sup>1</sup> in A, 252, all have "knowe," in B, 476, all except the revised R have "owe." These are minutiae, to be sure, but nothing justifies us in assuming that the changes were made by the scribe. And certainly the scribe did not insert the 32 lines which immediately follow this passage in B (ll. 485-516), and which clearly show that B had been revising in this portion of the work.

That a man may read over his own work more than once without noticing errors and inconsistencies is, alas! too true, as all of us can testify, but Mr. Jusserand's parallels to this case seem hardly in point. Mr. Roosevelt, it seems, read three proofs and published several editions of his *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter* before he discovered that on a single page he had given in two varying forms the information that "bobcats are very fond of prairie dogs, and haunt the dog towns as soon as spring comes." Such an oversight is easily intelligible; the sen-

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Knott informs me that three of the MSS which were not collated by Skeat have *reddere*, by contamination of their source with B. I have neglected to inquire about the other passages cited here, as the existence of contaminated readings would not affect the argument.

tences are varied in expression, and neither contains anything incongruous with the general situation. But the cases are different. In the first place, if Mr. Jusserand is right, Langland was a man of very different temperament from Mr. Roosevelt. In the second place, great as may have been the care Mr. Roosevelt took with this book, it can hardly be maintained that he devoted his life to it or regarded it as his life-work. Thirdly, I venture to suggest that, if the carelessness of copyist or printer had allowed a gnu or a rhinoceros to stroll into the village of the prairie dogs, Mr. Roosevelt would have recognized and ejected the intruder in a moment. And this would be a parallel case, for the Robert the Robber passage is as much out of place in connection with Sloth. The author could not fail to recognize, as soon as he read it or any part of it, that it did not belong here.

The citation of the misplaced leaf in *Don Quixote* I do not understand, though a reviewer in the *London Times* also suggested that a consideration of it and especially of Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelley's remarks upon it would be beneficial to me. The fact is that Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelley is confident that Cervantes did not write the passage about the stealing of Dapple or put it in the place it occupies. He says, "We are forced, by the logic of facts and evidence, to the conclusion that the additions were made by Robles or by Cuesta" (Introduction to his ed. of Ormsby's translation, Glasgow, 1901, p. xvi). Mr. Ormsby was of the same opinion; in his note on the passage (Vol. I, p. 168) he says, "But Cervantes, there can be very little doubt, had nothing whatever to do with this passage." The argument is too long to be resumed here, but the reasons for refusing to credit Cervantes with the blunder are singularly like those for disconnecting the original author with the failure to perceive and remove the blunders in *Piers Plowman*.

Another example Mr. Jusserand thinks he can give from the C text. The ten lines added by C after the names of Piers's wife and children are, he thinks (p. 20), out of place; they really are addressed by Piers to the Knight and belong just before C, IX, 53. "What 'dere sone' is he now [in l. 91] addressing?" says Mr. Jusserand; and his reply is, "the Knight." But without

emphasizing the unlikelihood that the peasant Piers would assume this tone with the Knight and call him "dere sone," it is clear that C intended the passage to stand precisely where it now stands in the C text, and the "dere sone" of l. 91 is the "sone" whose name begins in l. 82. Let us look at the passage:

- Hus sone hihte Suffre: thy sovereynes have here wil  
 Deme hem nouht for yf thou do: thou shalt dere abigge  
 Consaile nat the comune: the Kyng to displese  
 85 Ne hem that han lawes to loke: lacke hem nat ich hote  
 Let god worthe withal: as holy writ techeth  
 Maistres as the meyres ben: and grete men senatours  
 What thei comaunde as by the kyng: contrepleide hit nevere  
 Al that thei hoten ich hote: heyliche thou suffre hem  
 90 By here warnyng and [wordyng] worch thou ther-after  
 Ac after here doynge do thou nat: my dere sone, quath Piers.

I have left this unpunctuated because any punctuation must involve an editorial interpretation, and I wish the passage to be its own interpreter. Is not this from beginning to end inseparably connected with l. 82? Is this not merely one of the many examples of the carelessness and thoughtlessness with which expansions were made in the revisions? The advice is appropriate enough for the son, it is highly unsuited for the Knight. There can be no doubt, I think, that awkward as the passage is, impossible as it is to tell where name ends and advice begins, it is in the place C intended it to have. It is a slight confirmation of this that l. 86, which C incorporates in the passage Mr. Jusserand wishes to transfer, follows C 83 immediately in both the A and B texts.

But after all, Mr. Jusserand thinks that B did notice that Robert the Robber was in the wrong place, and that he prepared to transfer it to the proper place but neglected to mark it for removal (p. 18). Evidence of intention he finds in the passages on restitution which B inserted in Coveitise. Quoting B, V, 232ff., he remarks: "The restitution here alluded to is precisely that which a penitent thief should make, the question being of stolen goods." True, and it would be making too fine a point, perhaps, to hint that this insertion, good as it is, is not in harmony with

A's account of Coveitise, since A represents him as dishonest and full of cheating tricks but not as a robber or a thief; though we all know that in some ages of the world merchants accustomed to cheat systematically and daily would be aghast at the thought of formal theft or robbery. What really is of significance is: (1) that B does not make these insertions in such form or at such places as to aid in attaching the Robber passage to Coveitise; (2) that they are as fully accounted for without the transfer of the Robber passage as with it; (3) that, if B intended to transfer the passage, he made no preparations for the transfer in the passage itself, he neither restored to the MS the line:

Then was ther a Walishman· was wonderliche sory,

which Mr. Jusserand thinks belonged to the original text but was torn off or otherwise lost from the loose leaf the scribe of A had (p. 22, n. 2), nor restored to its original form the line:

And ȝit I-chulle ȝelden aȝeyn· ȝif I so much have

which the scribe of A had thoughtfully substituted for:

He highte 'ȝyvan ȝeld-aȝeyn,' etc.

Furthermore, if Mr. Jusserand accepts Professor Skeat's view that MS Laud 581 was corrected by the author himself, or perhaps indeed his own autograph, it is worth observing that neither the large nor the small crosses noted by Professor Skeat as indicating places where corrections were to be made (Vol. II, pp. lxix) stand beside this passage.

The crowning proof that Langland wrote the Robert the Robber passage and knew where it belonged, although he neglected repeated opportunities to put it in its proper place or even to restore it to its original form, is, according to Mr. Jusserand, the fact that thirty-six years after it was misplaced, C assigned it to Coveitise, where it belonged all the time; moreover, he restored to it a missing line so marvelously adapted to its purpose as to mark him as beyond a doubt the original author (p. 22). Some objections to the view, held by Mr. Bradley and Mr. Jusserand, that this passage was originally attached to Coveitise may be found below (p. 60). These are confirmed by the fact, just mentioned,



that through all the years of his occupation with the poem B gave no sign that he knew that the first line of this passage was missing and that the second had been rewritten by a misinformed scribe. Moreover, the joining of this passage to Coveitise by C is not the simple and satisfactory thing it may seem to those who have not examined it carefully. In the first place, the so-called restoration of reading in the second line has changed a perfectly simple and grammatical sentence into a *monstrum informe, cui lumen ademptum*, neither the flesh of a name nor the fish of a promise, a ghastly amphibian whose existence cannot be justified by any of the passages quoted by Mr. Jusserand (p. 23, n. 3). Again, it is well to remember that there are sometimes two ends to a passage, and to look at the other end of this. It will then appear at once that C is not replacing the passage in the position it ought to have occupied all the time in the A and B texts, but transferring to this place a passage that belonged elsewhere and patching up a connection at the joints by using some of the old material of B for the newcomer. Thus C, VII, 334-37 is a reworking of B, V, 290, 291, applied now to Robert the Robber instead of to Syr Hervy Coveitise. See, moreover, how the whole insertion, C, VII, 309-39, breaks into and destroys B's fine conception of the despair of Coveitise (B, V, 286-92). Finally, observe that C's placing of the passage in question under Coveitise does not stand alone and unexampled. As Professor Skeat long ago pointed out, it is only a part of a general process by which C transfers to the Seven Sins passages of similar content from various parts of the B text. Thus, after B, V, 48 (the sermon), C inserts B, X, 292-329; after B, V, 71 (Pride), he inserts B, XIII, 278-84, 292-313, preceded by a few lines of his own; B, VII, 72-75 (Lechery) he transfers to a somewhat later position and adds B, XIII, 344-52, with some lines of his own; of B's account of Envy he omits a part, but after B, V, 119 inserts B, XIII, 325-42; B's Wrath he leaves with little change; but Coveitise he changes much, inserting after B, V, 267 the following bits: B, XIII, 362-68, 371-75, 384-89, 392-99, and after B, V, 289 the Robert the Robber passage; B's Glutton is left practically unchanged, but at the end of Sloth (B, V, 462) he inserts B, XIII, 410-57. Are all these passages from B, X and B,

XIII passages which careless scribes had misplaced and which it required the hand of the author to restore to their original places? No one will maintain such a thesis. And it seems clear that C had no better reason for his transfer of the Robber passage than for his transfer of the others.

The much lauded Welshman *ȝyvan ȝeld-aȝeyn* does not, I admit, impress me greatly. He doesn't seem to me genuine, and I fancy I can see C concocting him out of the hint afforded by the alliteration of "*ȝelden aȝeyn*." And he seems, after all, to have been a gentle thief; indeed, from his name one might easily infer that thieving was altogether contrary to his nature. If C names his people on the same principles as A, we ought to infer that his residence in the West Countrie, far from giving him an unfavorable opinion of the Welsh, had impressed him with their fundamental honesty. Chaucer, indeed, always speaks respectfully of the Welsh (perhaps in remembrance of Kynge Arthour and the Bret Glascurion, whom Mr. Jusserand has overlooked), but we have the immemorial jingle to assure us that

Taffy was a Welshman,  
Taffy was a thief.

Finally, we may be pretty sure that Dr. Furnivall was right in demanding for the antecedent of *Reddite* not a person named with an English equivalent of this word, but an exhortation to restitution containing, probably, some Latin quotation in which this word *Reddite* was prominent, or perhaps, as Mr. Knott reminds me, a character definitely named in Latin, like "*Vigilate the veil*."

#### IV

Continuing the discussion of the Robert the Robber passage, Mr. Jusserand (pp. 25, 28, 29) attacks my statement that B made insertions in Sloth intended to justify the lines on restitution. He finds in these insertions "no intimation that any of his misdeeds was committed with the intention of *winning* money; it was with him mere negligence" (p. 28). That negligence is the principal element in Sloth is true, but in the following lines inserted by B I think I find another element, in preparation, as I have said, for the restitution passage:

ȝif I bigge and borwe it, · but-ȝif it be ytalled,      429  
 I forȝete it as ȝerne; · and ȝif men me it axe  
 Sixe sithes or sevene, · I forsake it with othes,  
 And thus tene I trewe men · ten hundreth tymes.

That the forgetfulness is not altogether involuntary is suggested by "ȝerne" and certainly a man who has to be asked six times or seven for a just debt and constantly denies it, is guilty of more than negligence. But even if one insists upon finding in these lines and in l. 435, which tells how Sloth treats his servants when they demand the wages that are overdue, only culpable negligence and not dishonest intent, the mere fact that money has been improperly withheld from its rightful claimants is sufficient reason for restitution on the part of a repentant sinner. Mr. Jusserand maintains that if B had introduced any lines in order to lead up to and justify the restitution passage, he would have changed the word *wan* in A, V, 237:

Al that I wikkedly wan · sith I witte hadde.

But surely this is demanding of B an attention to details and a care for systematic revision justified no better by Mr. Jusserand's conception of him than by mine. Finally it is difficult to discover why B introduced such additions as I have pointed out if they were not intended to prepare the way for the restitution passage. Injury to one's own estate is regularly recognized as one of the results of sloth, the increase of it is not.

Mr. Jusserand next argues that neither A, B, nor C can make a correct list of the Seven Sins on the first trial, and that this proves that they are one and the same person. Four attempts at lists occur in the poems, in A, II and V, and B, XIII and XIV (= C, XVII), and only one of them is correct, says he. But let us not take the facts without inquiring into their meaning. The third list is complete. Moreover, B had apparently no difficulty in discovering that the first and second (in A) were incomplete, and he would therefore probably in his examination of the text, while it was passing through the four stages represented by B, Rawl. Poet. 38, Ilchester, and C, have observed and remedied the omission of Envy in the fourth list (B, XIV = C, XVII), unless there were some particular reason for not doing so.

That reason is, perhaps, not hard to discover. B begins to expound the dangers threatening the wealthy, but before he has finished with the first Sin, Pride, he has mentioned the poor, and having touched this, his favorite theme, his exposition, forgetting its original purpose, becomes immediately, that is, with the discussion of Pride, the first Sin, a praise of the immunity which poverty enjoys from every sin:

If Wratthe wrastel with the pore, · he hath the worse ende (l. 224)  
 And if Glotonie greve poverte, · he gadereth the lasse (l. 229)  
 And if Coveitise wolde cacche the pore· thei may nouȝt come  
 togideres (l. 238)  
 Lecherye loveth hym nouȝt· for he ȝeveth but lytel sylver (l. 249)  
 And though Sleuthe suwe poverte · and serve nouȝt god to paye,  
 Mischief is his maister · and maketh hym to thynke  
 That god is his grettest helpe.<sup>1</sup> (ll. 253-55)

With this changed intention, it is not hard to see why Envy is omitted.<sup>2</sup> Envy can hardly be called a sin against which poverty is an effective remedy. The same reason that caused B to omit Envy would prevent C from adding it.

The situation, then, is this: We have two lists from which, for some reason yet to be determined, the sin of Wrath is omitted; of the two remaining lists, one is complete and the incompleteness of the other is clearly due to a cause which cannot be invoked for the first two. Is it not too bold to assert, on the basis of such evidence, that we have to do with an author incapable of making a complete and correct list? Whatever may be the cause of the incompleteness of the first two lists, permanent inability to make

<sup>1</sup>After a simile, follows a discussion of what poverty is.

<sup>2</sup>In all the MSS of B except R, the last two lines of Wrath and all of Glotonie are omitted, but R several times has passages necessary to the context that can only have been omitted from the other MSS by mistake.

CXVII, although tabulated as a fifth version, is rightly said in the text to be only a slight variant of B, XIV. The variation is, indeed, of even less importance than one might suppose. B does not, as a matter of fact, spoil this list by discussing or listing Sloth twice. Sloth is formally discussed in ll. 253 ff., and the word "sloth" is used in connection with "gluttony" in l. 234, but this casual use of a word can surely not be counted as another treatment of Sloth, in view of the fact that all the sins are treated definitely and formally. There are equally good, if not better, grounds for saying that B regarded Coveitise and Avarice as different sins and tried to make up the count of seven in that way, for ll. 238-43 are formally devoted to Coveitise and ll. 244-48, with equal formality, to Avarice. Sloth, we may safely maintain, is not listed twice; and C's correction in l. 77 is not a correction of the list as a list, but a mere variant, of no more significance than other variant readings in the same passage, such as C, XVII, 64, 68, 70, 71, 76, 79, etc.

a complete list can hardly be spoken of as "the author's mark, his seal and signature." And since it is incredible that a mediaeval author who could count as high as seven should have been unable to make a complete list of the Seven Sins when he deliberately set himself to do so, as is certainly the case in both A, II and A, V, we seem irresistibly led to the conclusion that the absence of Wrath in both instances is due to accidents that occurred after the original had left the author's hands.

Concerning the confession of Wrath added by B, Mr. Jusserand maintains that I am wrong in regarding it as so unlike the work of A as to suggest that A and B are not the same person, and his argument is twofold: "(1) An author is not bound, under pain of being cleft in twain, always to show the same merits, in every respect, on every occasion, at all times; (2) the confessions in it are not so good and the additions in B are not so bad as Mr. Manly makes them out." To the first proposition, as a general proposition, I readily and heartily assent, but it remains none the less true that such differences may exist between two pieces of writing as strongly to suggest difference of authorship. Such differences I presumed to point out in this instance and I regarded them as important in connection with the numerous other reasons we have for suspecting that A and B were not the same. As to the second proposition, it does not touch the point at issue. I have never, at any time or in any place, denied the ability of B to write lines as good as any written by A; on the contrary, B has some passages which—as I think and have always thought—are entirely out of the range of A's ability. But the excellences of A and B are different and their defects are also different. Mr. Jusserand attempts here and elsewhere to meet this point, partly by emphasizing certain fine qualities of B's work, which I recognize as heartily as he, and partly by trying to show that A is guilty of the same sort of confusion of thought shown by B. Thus, here he tries to answer my charge that the confession of Wrath in B gives us really a picture of Envy rather than of Wrath, by saying, (1) that some of A's portraits are inappropriate to the Sins to which they are assigned and (2) that Envy and Wrath are so much alike that B

cannot justly be criticized for giving us a portrait of Envy and labeling it Wrath.

The example of inappropriate traits in portraiture by A alleged by Mr. Jusserand is furnished by Pride, and two lines are specified in support of the allegation. In both instances I disagree with him as to the interpretation of the lines. In order that there may be no mistake I will quote the whole passage:

Pernel Proud-herte platte hire to grounde, (45)  
 And lay long ar heo lokede' and to ur Ladi criede,  
 And beohizte to him' that us alle maade,  
 Heo wolde unsouwen hire smok' and setten ther an here  
 Forte fayten hire flesch' that frele was to synne: (49)  
 "Schal never high herte me hente' bote holde me lowe,  
 And suffre to beo misseid' — and so dude I nevere.  
 And now I con wel meke me' and merci beseche  
 Of al that ichave ihad' envye in myn herte." (53)

The lines quoted as inappropriate to Pride are ll. 49 and 53. Mr. Jusserand thinks that l. 49 implies that Pernel had been guilty of lechery, and cites a similar phrase from the account of Mede.<sup>1</sup> But Pride is one of the sins of the flesh, disciplined, as I have shown above (p. 20), by the wearing of a "hair;" and "frail to sin" would not necessarily imply the particular kind of sin which Mr. Jusserand has in mind; and, finally, "frele" is apparently the reading of MS V only, "fers" or "fresch" being probably the original reading in A as well as in B.<sup>2</sup> In l. 53 Mr. Jusserand finds Pernel confessing the sin of Envy (in the modern sense), but there is no other hint of this attitude on the part of Pernel, and the word "envy" may mean only "hatred" or "ill-will," as may be seen from the quotations given in the *N. E. D.*, s. v. 1. We have no right to impose upon words meanings unsuited to the context when there are others that suit the

<sup>1</sup> In A, III, 117, one group of MSS (V and H) have:

Heo is frele of hire flesch' fikel of hire tonge;

the other group (T, U, D) have "feith" instead of "flesch;" that "feith" is the original reading is perhaps indicated by the fact that H of the other group has "feith" instead of "tonge."

<sup>2</sup> Professor Skeat gives the readings thus "*frele*] fers T; fresch H U." H, which belongs to the same group as V, has therefore not the reading of V; "fresch" is, as the genealogy indicates, the right reading; "fers" is simply a variant spelling of "fresch."

context perfectly. The supposed fault in the confession of Lechour I have already dealt with (p. 20).

Mr. Jusserand's second contention, that Envy and Wrath are so much alike or so closely connected that B cannot be criticized for confusing them, may now be examined. At the top of p. 31, he quotes two lines from the A text about the sowing of strife by Envy, and says this is "one of the classical attributes of Wrath." That Wrath may be the motive for such action is true, but so may Envy, and in the line preceding those quoted by Mr. Jusserand Envy explains his motive thus:

His grace and his good hap · greveth me ful sore.

—A, V, 79.

Continuing, Mr. Jusserand calls attention to the fact that Chaucer's chapter on Wrath in the *Parson's Tale* begins: "After Envye wol I discryven the sinne of Ire. For soothly whoso hath Envye upon his neighebor, anon he wole comunly finde him a matere of wrathe, in word or in dede, agayne him to whom he hath envye." This is, indeed, the beginning, but it does not justify the substitution of Envy for Wrath. Chaucer's next sentence is: "And as well comth Ire of Pryde as of Envye; for soothly he that is proud or envious is lightly wrooth." Finally, Mr. Jusserand points out in Chaucer's chapter on Wrath many particulars which show "how vague were the limits then assigned to each sin." But in the Middle Ages the Seven Sins were treated as tempers or tendencies out of which particular misdeeds grow. And, naturally, the same deed, the same sin, may originate in any one of several different tempers or tendencies. The Sins are ruling passions which may lead to very various manifestations. The point in our present discussion is this: In A the Sins are personifications of the ruling passions or tendencies—Pernel is Pride, Lechour is the lecherous man, Envy is the envious man, Coveitise is the avaricious man, Glutton is the drunkard, Sloth is the slothful man (and I think I have met successfully the effort to show confusion in the characterization), whereas B's Wrath is in no sense the wrathful man, but only a meddling busy body, who, animated sometimes apparently by Envy and sometimes by a general love of slander, does things which cause jangling and strife, but is himself, so far

as appears, not at all subject to the sin of Wrath. C felt this, apparently, for he rewrote the beginning to remedy the defect; cf. C, VII, 105-14.

Mr. Jusserand's playful suggestion that the style of the *Parson's Tale* could be used as an argument that it is not by Chaucer, is by no means so absurd as it may seem. It is, indeed, perfectly clear that the style of this tale is determined by another personality than that of Chaucer. It exhibits none of his characteristic qualities, precisely because it is, in its determinative elements, not his work, because he is not the creator of the thought and style but a mere translator, whose personal qualities have left scarcely a trace, if any, upon the translation. In other words, we have in the *Parson's Tale* in reality not the style of Chaucer but that of other men of entirely different gifts.

## V

In Part V Mr. Jusserand deals with some instances in which I asserted that B or C had misunderstood his predecessor or spoiled a passage written by him. He suggests that the examples I gave were "doubtless the best available ones." They were, indeed, merely specimens, and the number might easily have been increased; they suited my purpose especially, partly because they could be very briefly phrased—and I was throughout the article obliged to study brevity as much as possible—and partly because they seemed to me, as Mr. Jusserand says they seem to him, "very telling ones if they held good." That they do hold good, in spite of the attack upon them, I hope to be able to show.

1. I said: "In II, 21 ff., Lewte is introduced as the leman of the lady Holy Church and spoken of as feminine." Mr. Jusserand's reply is threefold: (a) "There cannot be any question here of B having misunderstood A, as the passage is quite different in both texts and there is no mention at all of Lewte in A;" (b) "Lemman does not necessarily mean a man;" (c) "Very possibly there may be nothing more in the passage than a scribe's error, 'hire' being put for 'him.'" I should reply: (a) Surely making the leman of lady Holy Church feminine involves a spoiling of the conception of A, and a misunderstanding or for-



getfulness of it—for misunderstanding may accompany the addition of lines and characters; (b) I was aware that “leman” may mean a woman as well as a man, and I have nowhere suggested that it could not, my point being that here the “leman” of a lady is spoken of as feminine; (c) there is nothing in the text to indicate that “hire” is a scribe’s error for “hym;” and when we have so many evidences of B’s tampering with the conceptions of A, we have no right to relieve him in this case by a purely gratuitous assumption. But, says Mr. Jusserand, C corrected it to “hym.” So he did; C more than once corrects B’s errors, as I originally pointed out. But if it was a scribe’s error, it is notable that it appears in all the texts of B and was therefore apparently in the original of B (which, according to Mr. Jusserand, was the author’s own copy, which he kept by him and allowed to be copied from time to time); it is not marked for correction in MS Laud 581, which Professor Skeat regards as the author’s autograph, containing indications of errors that must be corrected; Rawl. Poet. 38, which, according to Skeat and Jusserand, is a revised version of B, is not available for this line. The evidence is therefore pretty strong that the error was B’s, and it cannot be disposed of by the convenient but unsupported supposition of a scribe’s error. To say, as Mr. Jusserand does, “Of B having failed to understand or of having committed any error, there is *no trace*,” seems to me unwarranted by the facts.

2. I said: “In II, 25, False instead of Wrong is father of Meed, but is made to marry<sup>1</sup> her later.” Mr. Jusserand’s reply is here more elaborate but not more successful, I think. He maintains that Wrong was very badly chosen as a father for Meed, that B recognized this and improved the situation by making Favel the father, though, unfortunately, the scribe again misrepresented B’s intention and put “False” instead of “Favel.” This scribe is surely a most troublesome person, though this was not discovered until after my theory was propounded, Professor Skeat, indeed, going so far as to comment upon the remarkable

<sup>1</sup> Of course I was wrong in saying, and Mr. Jusserand in repeating (p. 33), that False marries Meed; they are ready to marry but the wedding is prevented.

purity of the B text, and to maintain that in one copy of it we have the author's autograph. "Wrong was very badly chosen [by A] as a father for Meed, and was given, besides, nothing to do," says Mr. Jusserand. "The marriage was not arranged by him; the marriage portion was not supplied by him; in the journey to Westminster he was forgotten; his part was limited to signing, first among many others, the 'feoffment' charter supplied by other people." Whether Wrong was appropriately chosen as a father for Meed, is, I take it, a question of opinion and taste; I myself feel that Favel (= Flattery) is hardly as appropriate as Wrong for the father, or main cause, of Meed. And I do not understand Mr. Jusserand to argue that A's failure to assign Wrong as prominent a part in the preparations for the marriage as Mr. Jusserand thinks he ought to play is reason for believing that A really intended another character as the father but, like B, was baffled of his purpose by a careless or meddlesome scribe. The truth seems to be that Meed herself was, according to A's conception, a very desirable bride, so much so that her father needed to do nothing to secure a husband for her; False desired her, and Favel, Guile, and Liar (II, 23-25) were the principal agents in making the match. The "feoffment" was not a settlement made by the bride's father—none such was necessary—but a settlement made by the other party, False, Favel, etc., "in consideration of Meed's consent to matrimony"—a common form of settlement, fully discussed in the law-books. Others besides Mr. Jusserand (p. 34) have perhaps been troubled by the fact that in l. 58 the feoffment is represented as made by False (Falseness) and in l. 61 by Favel.<sup>1</sup> But distress on this point might have been relieved by calling to mind that in ll. 37-39 both False and Favel are represented as principals in the matter:

Sir Simoneye is of-sent' to asseale the chartres,  
That Fals othur Fauvel' by eny fyn heolden,  
And feffe Meede therwith' in marriage for evere.

To say, as Mr. Jusserand does (p. 34), that Favel had already been playing the part of father to Meed seems to involve a misconception of A's whole intention; Favel is the friend and helper

<sup>1</sup> The source of the feoffment is even more complicated in B than in A, cf. B, II, 60, 72, 78

of False. The father, Wrong, has no occasion to do anything except affix his signature to the feoffment as first and principal witness.

That B intended to make Favel the father and was prevented from doing so only by a scribe's error<sup>1</sup> is, however, according to Mr. Jusserand, "not a mere surmise, . . . it is a demonstrable fact. The same confusion between these two names, the same use of the one instead of the other, do not occur only in text B, but also in text C, and also in text A itself. . . . In version A, the feoffment is said, in II, 58, to be made by False, and three lines farther on by Favel; False is a mistake for Favel." I have just explained this passage and need say no more. "In version C, we are told," says Mr. Jusserand, "in III, 25, that 'Favel was hure fader,' and on l. 121, that 'Fals were hure fader.'" These statements concerning the C text are accurate as far as they go, but they require a little supplementary examination. The first of the passages, C, II, 25, is taken over from B with no change except the substitution of "Favel" in C for "False" in B. The second passage, C, II, 121, is, on the other hand, an entirely new line, added by C; it runs as follows:

Thouh Fals were hure fader and Fykel-tonge hure syre,  
Amendes was hure moder.

Mr. Jusserand requires us to believe either that, after changing "False" to "Favel" in l. 25, C wrote a new line, 121, repeating the error introduced into B, II, 25 (=C, III, 25), not by B, but by a scribe, or that, by some strange fatality, a scribe committed the same error of substitution in C, III, 121 that another scribe had committed twenty-three years earlier in B, II, 25. The attempts to meet my arguments in this and the preceding instance seem to me to involve too many coincidences and to overwork the theory of scribal error. The true explanation of the present instance is, I presume, that in B, II, 25, B carelessly substituted "False" for "Wrong" as the father of Meed, forgetting for the moment that False was the proposed husband; then C, in rewriting B, at first accepted B's conception and

<sup>1</sup> No correction of this supposed scribal error was indicated in Laud 581. Rawl. Poet. 38 does not contain the line.

added C, 121, on this basis, but later, observing the inappropriateness of making False both father and husband of Meed, he (or someone else) substituted "Favel" for "False" in l. 25 but forgot to do the same in l. 121.

But, continues Mr. Jusserand, "the same intention to give Meed a different parentage, better justifying Theology's otherwise ludicrous remarks is also shown by Langland adding in B a mention that Meed had Amendes for her mother, a virtuous character." This has, of course, no real bearing upon the argument we have just completed, and might, if it were true, be admitted without in the least affecting the conclusion we have reached. But it is not so certain that this is an addition by B. Let us see. Professor Skeat's text A, II, 87 reads:

For Meede is a Iuweler · a mayden of goode;

but "Iuweler" is, as Dr. Bradley has pointed out, a misreading of the Vernon MS, instead of some form of "mulier" (i. e., a legitimate child), the same as the "moylere" of text B (of the MSS of the A text T reads *molere*, U *muliere*, D *mulyer*, H *medeler*, H<sub>2</sub> *medlere*); in the second half-line only MSS V and H have the reading of Skeat's text, which is obviously due to the writer of the lost MS from which these two MSS are derived, the other MSS of the A text, i. e., T U H<sub>2</sub> D, read "of frendis engendrit." Now, it will be remembered that the corresponding line in B (l. 118) reads:

For Mede is moylere · of Amendes engendred.

Is it not clear that this was also the original reading of A, distorted in the MS from which all extant MSS of A are derived, and preserved in this distorted form by MSS T H<sub>2</sub> U D but emended for the sake of alliteration (and perhaps, also, of sense) by the immediate source of V and H? Some one may object that I am praying in aid the same sort of scribal interference that I have just refused to recognize when proposed by Mr. Jusserand. I do not think this is the case. I have, of course, never maintained that scribal errors may not disguise the author's intent, but only that Mr. Jusserand's suppositions of scribal error are unsupported by the evidence and involve too many strange coincidences. In

the present case, on the other hand, four of the six MSS quoted by Skeat at this point give a reading which is obviously related in some way to the reading of the B text; so far as I can see, either the reading of the B text was also the reading of the A text and was derived from it, or four MSS of the A text have at this point a reading due to contamination from B. The former supposition seems to be supported by the whole of A's conception of the twofold character of Meed, which was taken over, of course, by B and C. We may, then, safely conclude that "Amendes," the mother, was not added by B, but stood originally in A.<sup>1</sup>

3. I asserted that, "in II, 74 ff., B does not understand that the feoffment covers precisely the provinces of the Seven Deadly Sins, and by elaborating the passage spoils the unity of intention." Mr. Jusserand replies that B, not only noted the omission of one of the Sins, but supplied supplementary details without impairing the unity of intention. For my view as to the omitted Sin I must refer to p. 61, below, where it was necessary, for other reasons, to discuss the matter. That the unity of A's intention to cover *precisely* the provinces of the Seven Sins was impaired by B is shown by the fact that B's elaborations are so many and of such a nature as to obscure the fact that precisely seven provinces are in question and not an unsystematic general collection of all the sins the author could think of. I will quote only B's elaborations of the province of Pride (ll. 79-82):

To be prynces in pryde · and poverte to dispise,  
 To bakbite, and to bosten · and bere fals witesse,  
 To scorne and to scolde, · and sclandre to make,  
 Unboxome and bolde · to breke the ten hestes.

Is not the unity of intention somewhat impaired by these elaborations? Indeed, I will go farther and ask whether any student of *Piers Plowman* ever clearly recognized that this feoffment is intended to cover "*precisely* the provinces of the Seven Deadly Sins" before acquaintance with the simpler form of the A text enabled him to perceive the plan overlaid by the elaborations of B and C.

<sup>1</sup>This paragraph was written on the basis of the readings given by Skeat, as I had not access to Mr. Knott's collations, and had not seen the excellent discussion of this point by Chambers and Grattan, *Mod. Lang. Rev.*, IV, 368, who on the basis of all the MSS reach the same conclusion as I do.

4. I said: "In II, 176, B has forgotten that the bishops are to accompany Meed to Westminster and represents them as borne 'abrode in visytinge.'" Mr. Jusserand replies: "(1) B had no chance to *forget* [italics his] any such thing, as he was, without any doubt, working with a text of A at his elbow." But we have just seen that, even with a text of A at his elbow, B could forget that the leman of Holy Church must not be feminine and that False must not be made the father of the woman he was trying to marry. Continuing his reply he says: "(2) Contrary to what Professor Manly suggests, there is here no incoherency chargeable to B. In A, exactly as in B, Langland indulges in an incidental fling at bishops; no more in one case than in the other were they to go to Westminster at all. In A . . . .

For thei schullen beren bisshops · and bringen hem to reste . . . . may mean anything one pleases, except the implying of a tumultuous journey to Westminster or anywhere else." But I do not understand that the journey to Westminster was to be tumultuous. False was set "on a sysoures backe that softly trotted" (l. 135), "Favel on a fayre speche fetisly atyred" (l. 140), provisours were to be appareled "on palfreis wyse" (l. 148)—these do not sound to me like preparations for a tumultuous journey. "Of Westminster not a word," says Mr. Jusserand. But why should Westminster be mentioned in connection with each member of the party? It had already been distinctly stated as the destination of them all. As well object that Westminster is not mentioned in the lines already cited (ll. 135, 140, 148) or in ll. 146, 147, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157. "Bringen hem to reste" may not state definitely the destination, but it at least is not contradictory of the general plan of a journey to Westminster, as are B, 176:

To bere bischopes aboute · abroad in visytinge,

and C, III, 177, 178:

And shope that a shereyve · sholde bere Mede  
Softliche in saumbury · fram syse to syse.

In these the journey to Westminster is clearly and unmistakably forgotten for the moment or displaced by another satirical intention.

5. My arguments from the Robert the Robber passage and the Name passage, Mr. Jusserand says he has already answered. And I have replied to his answer (see above, pp. 21 ff.).

## VI

His sixth section Mr. Jusserand devotes to some of my stylistic arguments. He says, rightly enough, that most of these I have only mentioned and not developed, and he naturally neglects, as requiring too much space (I suppose), my attempt to indicate the large differences between A and B which occupies pp. 4-17 and and 22-28 of my chapter in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*. He does not think very highly of my general exposition of the differences in style, aim, method, interests, and mental peculiarities between A and B as a basis for declaring them to be different men, thinking that I have greatly exaggerated these differences and that, even if taken at my own estimation, they do not justify my conclusion. To reargue this question would be practically to repeat my exposition of the style, aims, method, interests, and mental qualities of each; and I am content to leave the decision to the future, believing, as I confidently do, that it is only necessary that students of *Piers Plowman* shall consider carefully all the manifold differences between the parts of this poem or group of poems to arrive ultimately at the conclusions to which the lucky chance of reading them in the right order has conducted me.

The differences in sentence structure and in versification I must again decline to discuss in detail, partly for lack of space and partly because I have not yet found a method for presenting some of my results that satisfies me. I could without great difficulty give a tabular presentation of statistics that would show striking differences in both of these features. But I am inclined to believe that tabular statements of statistics convince few readers, unless they carry with them some conception capable of more or less definite visualization. I will, therefore, at present only suggest that any reader can convince himself of the differences in sentence structure between A and B by comparing any hundred sentences in B's continuation of the poem (*passus* xi-xx) with any hundred

in A (Prol. and *passus* i–viii) and noting particularly such matters as absolute length, number of co-ordinate clauses, number of subordinate clauses, number of clauses in the second degree of subordination, etc.

As to versification the most striking difference between A and B is that B has a larger number of principal stresses in the half-line than A, and consequently also a larger number of unstressed syllables. An easy mode of presenting the extent of these differences is to represent each half-line by two numbers, that in the unit's place giving the number of stresses and that in the ten's place the number of syllables. First half-lines should of course be kept separate from second half-lines. The average for each half of the line in each text may then easily be obtained.

My statement concerning dialectical differences is so brief that it is perhaps not strange that Mr. Jusserand has misunderstood it. Had I foreseen as even a remote possibility that anyone should suppose that I was thinking of mere scribal variations, I would either have omitted the suggestion altogether or made it clearer. The point I had in mind was that it is possible to determine by well-known philological processes the forms of certain words in the original copies of the several versions. If we find, for example, that no instance of "are" occurs in A1 and that instances occur in A2, which, because they are essential to the alliteration, clearly proceed from the author and not from a scribe, we are justified in concluding, even if the texts of A2 contain also instances of "ben," that, in all probability, A2 used "are" and A1 did not. If we find that in B "she" is, according to the evidence of all extant MSS, the form of this pronoun in the source from which they are all derived, and that in A "heo" is, according to the evidence of all extant MSS, the corresponding form, we are justified in concluding that, in all probability the authors of the two versions differed as to the form of this pronoun. There still remains, of course, a possibility that the common source of the extant MSS of each version was not the author's original and differed from it in dialect. But if we can show further that the B text contains readings (of "he" for "she") based upon "heo" in the earlier text, we have confirmation of the evidence which points to "heo" as the



form used in the earlier text. Such instances occur. In A, III, 30, e. g., all the MSS have:

Hendeliche thenne heo · behihte hem the same,

and B has the same form "heo," in spite of the fact that "she" is the regular form in B for the feminine pronoun. Three MSS, indeed, C O B, have "she," but they form a small subgroup and "she" is clearly due to a correction in their immediate source. "We find as great differences between the various copies of the *same* version" as between the different versions, says Mr. Jusserand. Of course. Two scribes may differ as much as two authors; and the same differences which in the one case oblige us to conclude that the scribes are different men oblige us in the other to conclude that the authors are different men. Naturally it is not always easy to discover what forms were actually used by an author, but when these can be discovered, the conclusions are not hard to draw. In the case of *Piers Plowman* many dialectical questions must remain unsettled until we have a complete record of all readings, even those heretofore regarded as insignificant.<sup>1</sup>

With Mr. Jusserand's general attitude toward metrical questions, as expressed on p. 38, I find myself unable to agree. It is true that there are differences in versification between *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* and between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Tempest*, but the verse of both the former is characteristically Miltonic and that of the latter two characteristically Shakspearean. Mr. Jusserand would certainly admit that pieces of verse might be submitted for his judgment, which, on the evidence of versification alone, he could without hesitation pronounce to be not the work of either Milton or Shakspeare. And even if the differences between A and B be not so great as in this supposed case, they are at least worth noting as a part of the general argument concerning these two versions. The force of a large

<sup>1</sup>That the readings of other MSS than V of the A text must be taken into consideration in determining any point of A's style or language seems too obvious to require special statement, but Messrs. Chambers and Grattan, *loc. cit.*, p. 358, have strangely inferred that I regard the Vernon MS as the A text. That I have never entertained such an idea, if it does not appear from what I myself have written, as I think it does, is indicated by the fact, known to Dr. Furnivall and others, that Mr. T. A. Knott has, at my suggestion, been working for the past two years upon a critical text of the A version, the materials for which he collected in England and Ireland in the summer of 1907. As for myself, I have always tried to take into consideration the readings and relations of all the accessible MSS, and I venture to hope that no important statement made by me will be nullified by the critical text, when it appears.

number of important differences between two works cannot be broken by showing that each difference has been found in works undoubtedly by one author.

My praise of A and my emphasis of his possession of certain qualities lacking in the work of B seem to have misled Mr. Jusserand. I have nowhere declared "the first part of A the best in the whole work;" I have nowhere put it "so far above the rest as to imply a difference of authorship." I have re-echoed and quoted with the heartiest approval Mr. Jusserand's just and fine words about the merits of B, and I quoted several of the very finest specimens of B's powers (see *Camb. Hist. Engl. Lit.*, II, 28, 29), among them one so fine that Mr. Jusserand quotes it against me (p. 46) as if it upset my whole case. My argument is not at all concerned with the superiority of one version over another, but with the differences between them, differences which seem to me not superficial and shifting, but dependent upon innate and fairly permanent mental qualities and endowments.

In reply to my indications of differences in methods and interests between A and his continuators Mr. Jusserand exclaims, "Why not?" and "Again, why not?" I freely admit that no man is obliged to follow the same method of allegory all his life, but if we find such obvious attempts at the method of A as we do find at the beginning of A2 and of B's continuation (*passus xi*) we are justified in believing that A2 and B tried to use A's allegorical method and could not. But A2 and B both exhibit an interest in predestination and are thereby brought "near" to one another, says Mr. Jusserand. If an interest in predestination were excessively rare, this might indeed be of some importance, but I have already pointed out, I think, that in consequence of Bradwardine's *De Causa Dei* predestination was one of the chief topics of interest to serious-minded men in the fourteenth century (*Camb. Hist. Engl. Lit.*, II, 18). It is of more consequence that C seems to believe in astrology (C, XV, 30), whereas A2 and B apparently reject this and similar sciences (see A, XI, 152 ff.; B, X, 209 ff., and note that C omits the passage).

In order to show that A is as incoherent as B, Mr. Jusserand gives an outline of A, *passus i*, and the outline is certainly inco-

herent to the last degree. But any man's work will appear incoherent in an outline that omits the links of his thought. "The Lady answers, in substance: The tower on this toft is the place of abode of Truth, or God the father; but do not get drunk," runs the outline. Shall we supply the missing links? Instead of making a new outline *ad hoc*, I will quote from the one I gave in the *Camb. Hist. Engl. Lit.* (II, 6): "The tower, she explains, is the dwelling of Truth, the Father of our faith, who formed us all and commanded the earth to serve mankind with all things needful. He has given food and drink and clothing to suffice for all, but to be used with moderation, for excess is sinful and dangerous to the soul." Is this incoherent? Does it not furnish a sufficient reply—if one is unwilling to consult the original—to the questions which Mr. Jusserand asks, upon the heels of the sentence just quoted from him: "Why drunk, and why all those details about drunkenness that caused Lot's sins . . . ?" The dreamer's question about money and Holy Church's reply Mr. Jusserand calls "equally unexpected and irrelevant." Surely it is not difficult to see why the dreamer, having learned that God's gifts to his human creatures are food, drink, and clothing, should inquire about money. The question was not irrelevant, nor, to one familiar with mediaeval discussion, ought it to be unexpected.<sup>1</sup>

The rest of the outline is of the same character. There is no incoherency or confusion in the author's thought. I invite the reader to compare the outline given by Mr. Jusserand and that given by me in the *Camb. Hist. Engl. Lit.* (II, 7) with the original and decide for himself whether the strictures are justified. Mr. Jusserand may have missed the connection by accepting the reading of the Vernon MS in A, I, 92:

Kynges and knihtes · sholde kepen *hem* bi reson.

But all the other MSS (H, T, H2, U, D) read "it" for "hem," and the antecedent of "it" is "truth." If this connection is once lost, the text seems indeed hopelessly incoherent. As MS H belongs to the same group as MS V, it is clear that "hem" is an unauthorized variant, like many in this MS.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Jusserand thinks that the vision of the field full of folk was "nothing else than . . . the world as represented in a mystery play, just as we may see it pictured in the MS of the Valenciennes Passion." Where in *England* could the author have seen such a stage?

At the end of my discussion of the first vision, that is, at the end of *passus* iv, I remarked: "Only once or twice does the author interrupt his narrative to express his own views or feelings." This, says Mr. Jusserand, is "remarkably exaggerated," and he triumphantly cites III, 55, III, 84, VII, 306, VIII, 62, and VIII, 168, saying: "Here are, in any case, five examples instead of 'one or two.'" I submit that, in the vision to which my statement applied, there are only two. And I further submit—though I have just shown that my statement was not "remarkably exaggerated"—that neither VIII, 168 ff., which comes among the reflections and admonitions *after* the awaking on Malvern Hills, nor VII, 306 ff., which comes at a distinct pause in the action, marked by a formal division of the poem, nor VIII, 62, 63, a brief exclamatory demand for confirmation of an assertion, interrupts the narrative; and, finally, that none of these is at all comparable to the constant interruptions and excursions of B.

Mr. Jusserand quotes me as saying "that there is nowhere in A 'even the least hint of any personal animosity against any class of men as a class;'" and replies that in this he sees no great differences between any of the Visions, and that, as a matter of fact, the friars, like the lawyers, are condemned wholesale. It seems to me that Mr. Jusserand has not quite understood me. In the first place, I did not assert or even suggest that there was any difference between the authors (or Visions) in this respect. In the second place, the paragraph from which the quoted words are taken (*Camb. Hist. Engl. Lit.*, II, 11) implied a distinction between satire touching whole classes or groups of men and personal animosity against a class as a class. I thought this distinction was clearly implied, but perhaps it was not. I shall be obliged to the reader if he will refer to the paragraph and read the whole of it; here I will quote only two sentences: "The satire proper begins with *passus* ii, and, from there to the end of this vision [i. e., to the end of *passus* iv], is devoted to a single subject—Meed and the confusion and distress which, because of her, afflict the world. Friars, merchants, the clergy, justices, lawyers, all classes of men, indeed, are shown to be corrupted by love of Meed; but, contrary to current opinion, there is nowhere even the least

hint of any personal animosity against any class of men as a class, or against any of the established institutions of church or state."

In two paragraphs on p. 44 Mr. Jusserand strives to establish identity of authorship by various incidental remarks. He thinks that, in making additions to A 1, B writes like A 1, and in expanding A 2, writes like A 2. But I do not admit either proposition. The additions to A 1 are more like A 1 than are those to A 2, as would inevitably occur with any writer capable of being influenced by the nature of the work which he was expanding or elaborating, but this, I think, is as far as Mr. Jusserand's claim can be admitted. B makes picturesque additions to A 1, but, with perhaps a single exception, they bear little resemblance to the work of A 1; and he is discursive in his development of the theme of A 2, but lacks the dry pedantry of that writer, and possesses a command of picturesqueness and passion of which A 2 is incapable.

"One may be permitted," says Mr. Jusserand, "to ask what is the crowd which B ought to have described, and which he failed to visualize?" Surely the reply is not far to seek. Either the champions of Antichrist in *passus* xx or the forgotten host assembled by Pride in *passus* xix.

Aside from some matters to which I have already replied, the rest of Section VI is occupied with attempts to show that A 2 and B are capable of occasional passages of beauty or power. I have never questioned this. Here I will only call attention to the curious fact that the specific passages cited by Mr. Jusserand, fine as they are, were apparently not appreciated by C. For example,

Persen with a *pater noster* · the paleis of hevene (A, XI, 362)

though only a translation of *Brevis oratio penetrat coelum*, is happily phrased and worthy of admiration and preservation. What does C do with it? He rewrites it thus:

Persen with a *pater noster* · paradys other hevene,—

which somehow lacks quality, distinction. Again, the fine poetic cry cited by me in illustration of B's power of vivid expression, and repeated by Mr. Jusserand, can indeed hardly be cited too often or praised too highly:

Ac pore peple, thi prisoneres, · Lorde, in the put of myschief,  
 Conforte tho creatures · that moche care suffren  
 Thorw derth, thorw drouth · alle her dayes here,  
 Wo in wynter tymes · for wanting of clothes,  
 And in somer tyme selde · soupen to the fulle;  
 Comforte thi careful, · Cryst, in thi ryche!—B, XIV, 174 ff.

Would you not expect the man who had written those lines to preserve them—improved, of course, if they can be improved—in any revision or any number of revisions that he might make of his poem? Would you not really? But what does C do? He replaces them by some lines beginning with

Ac for the beste, as ich hope · aren somme poure and some riche  
 (C, XVII, 21 ff.)

and continuing with a prayer that God amend us all and make us meek and send us *cordis contritio, oris confessio, and operis satisfactio*. The whole passage from l. 20 to l. 37 is entirely out of harmony with the corresponding passage in B, and significant of the different attitudes of the two writers toward the poor. And this is only one of many similar instances.

Mr. Jusserand thinks that C greatly improved the episode of the pardon by suppressing “the lines telling, in previous versions, how Piers tore up his bull of pardon out of spite and simply because contradiction had irritated him.” If this were, indeed, the motive of Piers’s action, the suppression of it would doubtless be an improvement. But I do not so interpret the passage; “for puire teone” does not here mean “for spite and because contradiction had irritated him,” but “out of grief and disappointment.” He had what he supposed to be a pardon, but the priest who offered to construe it and explain it in English, read it and declared it to be no pardon at all. What more natural than that, in the first impulse of distress and disappointment, he should tear the supposedly lying document? It is only later (“siththe,” l. 101) that he recovers and comforts himself with, *Si ambulavero in medio umbre mortis, non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es*.

But even if the suppression had to be made, what shall we think of a writer who suppresses the whole discussion between Piers and the priest and continues with the line,

The preest *thus* and Perkin · of the pardon jangled,  
 which is nonsense after the suppression of the jangling?

I should also like to know the meaning of B, VII, 168 (C, X, 318),

And how the prest proved · no pardon to Dowel.

The priest certainly had not proved or asserted that no pardon was equal to Dowel. The line looks very much as if it were due to a mistake as to the meaning of A, VIII, 156. Ll. 155, 156 read:

And hou the preost impugned hit · al by pure resoun,  
And divinede that Dowel · indulgence passede.

B and C apparently thought "preost" was the subject of "divinede," whereas the subject is, of course, "I," implied in "me" of l. 152.

## VII

Section VII, briefer than the others, is devoted to an attack upon some of my evidence that C is a different person from B. Mr. Jusserand is not much impressed by my arguments. He is not certain that C spoiled the picture of the field full of folk (Prol. 11-16) and regards the broadening of the spectacle by the line,

Al the welthe of this worlde · and the woo bothe,

as something we could hardly afford to lose. My own feeling is that this line does not add one whit to the sweep of the poet's vision and that the writer who regarded it as necessary or even desirable to add such a line was fundamentally not a poet but a topographer.

Again—to my great surprise, I confess—Mr. Jusserand contends that C did not misunderstand the passage in the Rat Parliament about the creatures that wear collars about their necks and "run in warren and in waste." These were not, in the surface meaning, dogs, he asserts, but men, knights and squires. That in the ultimate intention they were men is no doubt true, just as the rats and mice were men and the cat and kitten a king and a prince. But this is a beast fable. What have men to do in it, among the rats and mice and cat and kitten? And, above all, why the warren and the waste? Do men run uncoupled in rabbit warrens and waste fields? No: in the allegory of B these were

dogs, and it needed the prosaic, literal spirit of C to turn them into "great sires, both knights and squires." I may remark parenthetically that I have found no other version of the fable which throws any light upon the question by mentioning these creatures, but the text of the B version is unmistakable.

If the differences of C from his predecessors could be accounted for by the supposition of advancing age, I should never have felt it necessary to suggest that he and B were not the same person. I have not striven to see how much the authorship of these poems could be divided. On the contrary, it would have been much simpler and easier if B and C could have been admitted to be one and the same person, and it was long before I was willing to divide the work of the A text and ascribe it to different authors. Mr. Jusserand seems to argue that, because C has some qualities sometimes possessed by old men (but also often by young men), he must be old, and that there are no differences between him and B that cannot be explained by this supposition. Where he gets his notion that A seems younger than B, I do not know.

"At times," I remarked, "one is tempted to think that passages were rewritten for the mere sake of rewriting." "Just so," replies Mr. Jusserand, "and who, except the author himself, would take so much trouble?" Is it to the author, then, that we owe the variants of the Lincoln's Inn MS of A, or MSS Camb. Univ. Ff. 5, 35 and Harl. 2376 of C? Or why should the author be more ready than another to make alterations which are not improvements but mere futile variations? Of the parallel supposed to be afforded by Ronsard I can say nothing, for I have not examined the revisions he made in his text, but I shall discuss below some of Mr. Jusserand's other parallels. It will be remembered, of course, that I based no argument as to difference of authorship upon the general character of the textual changes made by C.

Mr. Jusserand's explanation of the error of A 2 in regard to *non mecaberis* and *tabescebam* is ingenious, but hardly convincing. That A 2 should think of *mactabis* and *tacebam* when he had to translate the other words hardly relieves him of the



charge of inaccurate scholarship. What is the usual cause of mistranslation but this? As to B, he did not "notice one of these *misprints* [italics Mr. Jusserand's] and forget the other," as Mr. Jusserand thinks: he simply omitted the whole passage containing *tabescebam*. "If one of the versions had shown minute accuracy throughout, that would have told, in a way, for the theory of multiple authorship," says Mr. Jusserand. This I think we find in A 1.

## VIII

The whole of the eighth section is devoted to a plea that even if "the differences between the three versions" be taken at my own estimate, they can prove nothing, for similar differences exist between works known to be by the same author. Chaucer's tales of the Clerk, the Miller, and the Parson are cited. But surely Mr. Jusserand does not contend that such difficulties exist in supposing that the tales of the Clerk and the Miller are by the same writer as I have shown to exist in the case of *Piers Plowman*. As for the *Parson's Tale*, the thought, the composition, the style, is, as I have said, not Chaucer's; other men wrote it, he merely turned it into English, without giving it any of his individuality. *Hamlet*, again, presents no such similarities as are suggested; "fat and asthmatic" is hardly a fair rendering of "fat and scant of breath" when applied to a fencer, and, at the very time when these words were uttered, the fair Ophelia, if she had been alive, would doubtless still have thought Hamlet "slim and elegant," if we may use Mr. Jusserand's terms. The supposed contradictions in *Hamlet* are all of the same nature as Shakspeare's treatment of time-indications, a matter of momentary impression for dramatic purposes, as I have explained in my introduction to *Macbeth*. There are troublesome features in *Hamlet*, perhaps traces of an earlier hand, but nothing to indicate that the play should be divided as Mr. Jusserand suggests.

The cases of Montaigne, Cervantes, and Milton are, in my opinion, not at all parallel to ours. Milton and certain aspects of the Cervantes and Montaigne arguments I have already discussed. As for the rest, it may safely be asserted that if the

1588 edition of the *Essais* or the second part of *Don Quixote* had appeared anonymously, the style would in each case have led us to ascribe them to their true authors. The changes in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Conquistata* I have examined with some care. I find, somewhat to my surprise, that, although by no means so interesting as the *Liberata*, because of the exclusion of many episodes and the systematic assimilation of the heroes to antique models, the revision is not "the work obviously of a feebler hand," but, on the contrary, usually richer and more powerful in style, more concise and more packed with meaning. The current opinion I believe to be due solely to the disappointment critics have felt at the loss of the episodes which Tasso rejected as out of harmony with his new purpose and to their disapproval of his classicizing tendency.

*Robinson Crusoe* I have not read since about 1891, I think, but my recollection is that the superior interest of the first part is due, not to the style, but to the unique and moving situation which forms the subject of the book. It, like the later parts, is full of moralizations and religious reflections. The later parts fail to hold the reader mainly because their theme fails to grip either the reader or the author himself.

Mr. Jusserand warns us that if my methods are adopted, the whole history of literature will have to be rewritten. This warning is not unfamiliar; we have heard its like from the housetops on almost every occasion when a new truth in literary history, in science, or in social, political, or economic science, has been announced. And it has almost always had a measure of truth in it. Not all things, but some, have often had to be re-examined and re-explained or restated. But, even though I recognize all this and find comfort in it, I might still be alarmed at the wide possibilities suggested by Mr. Jusserand if I were indeed the first to thrust out my tiny boat upon this "South Sea of discovery." But as I understand the matter, I occupy no such position of danger and honor. I am merely a humble follower in paths of science long known and well charted. The history of literature has been rewritten very largely, and rewritten to no small degree by precisely the same methods that I have employed. And

unless human energy flags and men become content to accept the records of the past at their face value and in their superficial meaning, many another ancient error will take its place in the long list of those which could not bear the light of historical and critical research.

Shall I make a list of the achievements of my predecessors? It is not necessary. *Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?* Every reader can make for himself a list that will abundantly support my courage. And, curiously enough, more than one list will contain, among the names of those to whom such achievements are due, the name of Mr. Jusserand himself.

## IX

To the arguments for unity of authorship recalled at the beginning of Section IX I have already replied, and shown them to be unsound. The new "connecting link" is also too weak to sustain even its own weight.

The versions are bound together, Mr. Jusserand asserts, by hints about the author, his thoughts, and his manner of life. That the figure of the dreamer, once conceived, should be continued along essentially the same lines by anyone sufficiently in sympathy to wish to add to the poem, need occasion no surprise, even if the early figure were more definite and the continuations more consistent than they are. As for the localities, upon which so much stress is laid, the Malvern Hills are, no doubt, a locality with which A1 had special associations of some sort, but they have apparently no special significance for the other writers. Moreover, definiteness of localization, not unknown in other satirical poems, is not so marked a feature of all these visions as Mr. Jusserand implies. A's visions occur on Malvern Hills, A2's beside some unnamed wood. In C, VI, 1, the dreamer who had gone to sleep on the Malvern Hills apparently awakes in Cornhill, though it is of course possible to contend that this line is not a note of place but of time. B (and C) falls asleep while already asleep, B, XI, 1; awakes at some indefinite place, XI, 396, but meets and talks with Ymaginatyf, XI, 400—XII, 293; awakes again (in an unnamed place), XIII, 1; sleeps again, XIII, 21, and wakes, XIV,

332; is rocked to sleep by Resoun, XV, 11, and, while talking with Anima, swoons and lies in a long dream, XVI, 19—an absurdity omitted by C; awakes, *ibid.*, 167—not in C—and on Midlent Sunday meets Abraham or Faith, XVI, 172 ff., Spes, XVII, 1, and the Samaritan, or Christ, *ibid.*, 48 (cf. 107); awakes again, *ibid.*, 350; leans to a “lenten” and sleeps, XVIII, 5, and awakes, apparently in his cot in Cornhill, on Easter morning, *ibid.*, 424; in spite of the interest of the day, he falls asleep during Mass, XIX, 4; awakes and writes what he has dreamed, *ibid.*, 478; meets Need and converses with him, XX, 1; falls asleep, *ibid.*, 50; and, finally, awakes again, *ibid.*, 384. I have given in this *résumé* all the definite localizations of the dreams both as to time and as to place. If definiteness is the characteristic of A’s work, it clearly is not of B’s. C alters the framework so little that no conclusion can be drawn. The dozen or so places and things in and about London that are mentioned indicate, of course, some familiarity with London, but considering the importance of London and the number of its inhabitants, do not oblige us to assume unity of authorship, if there is any evidence against it.

The personal notes common to all the visions upon which Mr. Jusserand insists are in reality singularly few.

On the question of the increasing age of the successive authors (or the single author), which Mr. Jusserand again raises, I have already spoken. There is nothing to indicate that A 1 or A 2 is younger than B, or that B is younger than C. He cites the well-known passage, B, XII, 3 ff., to prove that the poet “has reached middle age, though not yet old age.” In B, XX, 182 ff., however, we learn that B has been overrun by old age (Eld) and has lost hair, teeth, hearing, and vigor, and that, because of age, Death draws near him. Of course it is easy to contend that many years elapsed between the composition of B, XII, and B, XX; but the truth probably is that we cannot construct the chronology of any of these poets from the hints given in the poems. “The minute care” as to chronology which Mr. Jusserand finds so extraordinary in these poems does not exist in reality. Professor Jack showed long ago how vaguely numbers are used (*Journ. Germ. Phil.*, III, 393–403). A good example is that cited by Mr. Jusserand as an

instance of minute care. C changes the "fyve and fourty wyntre" of B, XII, 3, to "more than fourty wyntre." If approximate accuracy were desired, would not "fyve and syxty wyntre" have been better?

Turning from these insignificant details, we find that Mr. Jusserand objects to my view that Kitte and Kalote are not to be taken literally as the names of the author's wife and daughter. He says that Kitte was not always a name of unpleasant import—which is perfectly true, of course—and he declares that the opprobrious meaning attributed to the names at that date is a mere assumption for which no proof is adduced. Now, my point is that *both* names have unpleasant suggestions. Had Kitte been used alone, I should have thought nothing of its import, but Kitte and Kalote together here are as unmistakable as Kyt calot in John Heywood's *Dialogue of Proverbs* (I, xi, 181).<sup>1</sup> Mr. Jusserand asks me to note that "the oldest example quoted in Murray's *Dictionary* of 'callet' being used to designate a 'lewd woman, trull, strumpet, drab,' is of about 1500." It is more important to note that this is the earliest meaning; and that the milder meaning is more easily derived from this than this from that. The Heywood and More passages will relieve us of the need of arguing the question whether "Kalote" and "callet" are the same word. So far as the opprobrious meaning of Kitte in the fourteenth century is concerned, I did not think it necessary to produce the evidence formally; in *Piers Plowman*, C, VIII, 300 ff., Actif says:

Ich have ywedded a wyf · wel wantowen of maners;  
 Were ich sevenyght fro hure syghte · synnen hue wolde;  
 . . . . .  
 Ich may nat come for a Kytte, · so hue cleueth on me.

I do not feel at all bound to explain why these names were chosen or why they were used in the passage where the dreamer (the author, Mr. Jusserand calls him) is awakened by the bells on Easter morn. It may be that he used the names loosely (= those poor dirty sinful creatures) for the sake of securing the sort of contrast of which he seems so fond and which he developed so

<sup>1</sup>Cf. also, "Frere Luther and Cate calate his nunne lye luskynge together in lechery," More, *Confut. Tindale*, Wks. 423/2, in *Oxf. Dict. s. v.* "callet."

remarkably in the figure of the dreamer, as Mr. Jusserand showed long ago in his brilliant and charming book on these poems. But there are many vagaries of B and C that I cannot explain. Even in connection with this Resurrection morn there is another that puzzles me. Why should the dreamer who has awakened so impressively at the sound of the Easter bells and bidden Kitte and Kalote creep to the cross—why should he, when he has dight him dearly and gone to church to hear the mass and be houseled after, fall asleep at the offertory, as he does in B, XIX, 5? “The answere of this,” in the words of Chaucer, “I lete to dyvynes.”

I referred to Professor Jack's article (cited above) as having proved conclusively that the supposed autobiographical details, given mainly by B and C, are mere parts of the fiction. Upon the basis of this Mr. Jusserand wishes to hold me responsible for every phrase of Professor Jack's article—some of which seem to me a little less definite than the admirable argument justifies—and also to make the curious inference that, because Professor Jack and I think that the dreamer and his career are a part of the fiction, and cannot be safely used to reconstruct the author's life, we are therefore committed to the position that the creators of this dreamer carefully excluded from their work every item of personal experience. Surely we are not so committed. Most fictions are in some way—not always ascertainable—based upon the writer's experience and observation. But even if one were told, in the case of a given fiction that 25 per cent. of it was true, it would be difficult, in the absence of other evidence, to separate the truth from the fiction; and in the present instance we have no means of determining what events are given literally, what are the results of observation and hearsay, and what are experience transformed beyond recognition. That Rabelais knew some of the places of which he wrote and among which he made his characters move is true enough, but does Mr. Jusserand maintain that every place Rabelais mentioned belonged to his own experience and that his biography could be written by transcribing the movements of Pantagruel or Gargantua or Panurge?

Mr. Jusserand is mistaken, I think, in believing that Professor Jack himself felt any misgivings in regard to his results.

What Mr. Jusserand takes as such are to be interpreted in the sense of the paragraph which precedes this. Professor Jack's expressions are too definite and explicit to admit of any doubt on this point when read in their entirety.

We do indeed know many of the hopes and fears, the interests and the ideals of the authors of these poems. This is not their biography, but it is far more important. The significance and importance of the poems lies not in the question whether the name William Langland can be definitely associated with them or not, nor in the question whether one or more of the authors was born or educated among the Malvern Hills and lived in Cornhill in later years, but in the fact that these hopes and ideals were cherished in the fourteenth century by men who gave them such expression as commanded the attention of many men of that time and still has power to kindle our imaginations and stir our hearts after the lapse of five centuries. For my own part, I find it especially significant, as I have before said, that more than one man was moved by these ideals and wrought upon these powerful poems.

## X

This were a wikked way' but who-so hadde a gyde,  
was the cry of the bewildered pilgrims, as they set out to seek Truth. Many readers of this discussion may feel that the way is even "wikkeder" with two guides, like Mr. Jusserand and myself, each pulling them in different directions and confidently recommending his route, not only as safer and better but as the only one that leads to the shining Tower. I can only hope that all who have followed me are not only content at the end of the long and tedious journey, but recognize that upon Mr. Jusserand's way many of the bridges which are fairest in outward seeming are really unsafe structures with a crumbling keystone, that pitfalls lie concealed beneath some of the most attractive stretches of his road, and, finally, that it leads them into a "no-thoroughfare" from which the confiding traveler must turn back and seek painfully the plain highway which he abandoned, under the influence of Mr. Jusserand's eloquence, for the soft but dangerous by-paths.

JOHN MATTHEWS MANLY

## A TERMINAL NOTE ON THE LOST LEAF

I had hoped to be able to keep the discussion of authorship—the fundamental question—from being complicated by the entirely subordinate question as to whether Mr. Bradley or I (or, I may add, Mr. Jusserand) had offered the most probable explanation of the way in which the confusion (and loss) occurred. And because it is in reality a matter which does not affect the fundamental question, I have never replied to Mr. Bradley's letter in the *Athenæum*. As, however, Mr. Jusserand dismisses my view with a word and finds some support for his own in one feature of Mr. Bradley's, I will present here briefly my reasons for still preferring my view to Mr. Bradley's.

And first, I will state the objections against my view as I understand them. Mr. Bradley, in his letter said only that "it leaves us still under the necessity of supposing that, after relating in succession the confessions of the seven sins, he [the poet] introduced at the end a new penitent, whose offenses, according to mediæval classification, belong to one of the branches of Covetousness;" but he would doubtless assent to the view held by Mr. Jusserand and by him credited also to Mr. Bradley (it is, indeed, implicit in Mr. Bradley's objection) that "no conceivable lost passage with lines making a transition from Sloth to Robert the Robber could be at all satisfactory." Dr. Furnivall has, in our talks on the subject, given as a reason for preferring Mr. Bradley's view to mine, that the loss of an inner double leaf, as supposed by me, could hardly occur.

To the second and first objections I would reply that I think we could safely trust the original author to write in sixty-two lines (the number missing according to my hypothesis) a thoroughly satisfactory transition from the personifications of the Sins to Robert the Robber and the "thousent of men" that "throngen togedere," weeping and wailing and crying upward to Christ, with which the *passus* ends; and one might expect him to introduce at the close of this scene concrete single figures before returning to the crowd, just as at the beginning of the scene, he had introduced between the mention of the "field ful of folk" and the Sins such figures as Thomas (l. 28), Felice (29), Watte and his wife (30), merchants (32),



priests and prelates (34), monks and friars (37) Wille, or William, as two MSS have it,<sup>1</sup> (44) and Pernel Proudheart (45), who from being purely concrete in l. 26 has become half abstract and transitional. Mr. Jusserand says rightly in another place (p. 21) that "the six lines [preceding the name of Robert the Robber] cannot be properly attached, such as they are, to any part of the poem, neither where they stand in A and B nor where the confession of Coveitise ends," which he and Mr. Bradley think is their real place. And he thinks that no one but the author could "imagine what single [additional] verse can make sense of that nonsense." I do not agree with him that C succeeded in doing this, but after finding, as he thinks he has found, that an author can make in a single line a connection inconceivable by anyone but himself, how can he maintain that with sixty-two lines in which to accomplish his task, an author of genius could not make a transition the precise nature of which we cannot now conceive? Sixty-two lines is much. Give a writer like A sixty-two lines and you make him a king of infinite space: the wide vision of the Prologue is accomplished in less than twice this amount. With regard to Dr. Furnivall's objection I will say that, although it is perhaps not very easy for a sewn MS to lose any of its inner leaves, yet such losses do occur, and not infrequently. I will cite only three instances. MS Dd. 3. 13 of the Camb. Univ. Lib. besides lacking some leaves at the beginning and the end has two gaps, says Professor Skeat (Vol. III, p. xliii), viz., XIV, 227—XV, 40 and XVI, 288—XVII, 41. I calculated that these gaps were caused by a single loss, that of the outside pair of a quire of eight. In reply to my inquiry upon this point, Dr. Jenkinson writes: "The two leaves missing are, as you surmise, the outside pair of a quire of eight; viz., h1 and h8." But this may not be accepted as a good parallel, as the leaves are an outer pair, although the quire is an inner quire and as such would be well protected under ordi-

<sup>1</sup> But for the later developments of the A 2, B, and C texts, no one, probably, would take this "Wille" or that in A, VIII, 43 for the author. These are no doubt the basis for the later developments, but I would point out: (1) that the author does not elsewhere in A speak of himself in the third person; (2) that, although Will copies the pardon in A, VIII, 43, 44, the author peeps over the shoulders of Piers and the priest fifty lines further on (l. 93) in order to see what it contains; (3) that in V, 44 Will apparently belongs to the same category of definitely named but otherwise unknown figures as Thomas and Felice and Watte.

nary circumstances. In the *Castle of Perseverance* the loss of the next to the outside pair of leaves of the second quire (i. e., B<sub>2</sub>) has caused two gaps, pointed out and discussed by Mr. Pollard (*The Macro Plays*, pp. xxxi f.). This is an inner pair of leaves and their loss would have been no more difficult if they had stood next to the innermost instead of next to the outermost pair.

Furthermore, as Mr. Knott points out to me, the immediate source of three *Piers Plowman* MSS (Rawl. Poet. 137, Univ. Coll. Oxf., and Trin. Coll. Dubl.) was a MS in which A, VII, 71-216 (less four lines) was misplaced. These 142 lines obviously occupied a single sheet, that is, either the two pages of a single leaf or the four pages of a double leaf which was the innermost of a quire. The latter seems the more likely, not only because MSS of about 36 lines to the page are commoner than those of 71, but also because, if the MS from which R U T<sub>2</sub> are derived be conceived as having about 36 lines to a page, the transferred passage will actually occupy the innermost double leaf of the third quire, supposing the quires to be made up of 4 double leaves or 16 pages. Apparently, therefore, the innermost leaf of a *Piers Plowman* MS was, in this instance, lost from its place.

The objections to my view seem, therefore, not serious. I prefer it to Mr. Bradley's, because, in the first place, it is simpler to account for both gaps, as I have done, by a single loss than to suppose, as Mr. Bradley does, that some loose sheets containing Wrath (and the end of Envy) were lost and the one containing Robert the Robber misplaced. Mr. Bradley's view makes it necessary to suppose that the author was prevented by some cause (perhaps death before the completion of the MS) from revising the copy made by the scribe. A scribe putting an author's work into book form from loose sheets would be more likely to be on his guard against getting a sheet in the wrong place than one who was copying a supposedly well-arranged book would be against a possible gap in his original; and no scribe thus on his guard would ever have thought of joining this Robert the Robber passage to Sloth. If he did not know where it belonged, he would probably put it under Coveitise, as C and Mr. Bradley and Mr. Jusserand

have done, in spite of the fact that, as it stands, it cannot be joined to Coveitise, and that no other Sin has two representatives. The very fact that the first impulse of every one is to refer this passage to Coveitise, combined with the facts that it was not put there by the scribe and cannot in its present form be put there by anyone, should teach us that this first impulse is wrong and that our theory must account not only for the existence of the passage but also for its present place in the MS.

Having explained, and I hope justified, my unwillingness to assent to Mr. Jusserand's assumption that Mr. Bradley has shown my theory of the manner in which the two faults in A, V occurred to be untenable, I wish to repeat that this is merely an incidental question, not fundamental to this discussion. Professor C. F. Brown in a letter to the *New York Nation* (Vol. LXXXVIII, pp. 298 f.; March 25, 1909) repeats independently a suggestion made by Mr. T. D. Hall in the *Modern Language Review* (Vol. IV, p. 1, Oct., 1908) that the whole difficulty in the Robert the Robber passage can be remedied by placing ll. 236-41 between l. 253 and l. 254. I do not see how it is possible for 236, 237 to follow 237, 238.<sup>1</sup> If Robert had not "wher-with," of what avail would be his conditional promise of restitution? In regard to the absence of Wrath from the territories of the Charter, II, 60-74, I may note that the MS from which all extant texts of A are derived already contained some errors. Like Professor Brown, I was at first disturbed by the recognition that the accidental absence of Wrath here and in *passus v* would be a curious coincidence, but I reflected that it would be very difficult to suggest a reason why the author should wish to omit Wrath; to be sure New Guise proclaims in *Mankind*, 699, the joyful news, "There arn but sex dedly synnys" (cf. also *Bannatyne MS*, p. 483), but he made a different omission, and we can guess his reasons. And if the author had no reason, but made the omissions accidentally, we still have the coincidence. But as Mr. Bradley says, it is incredible that a serious writer in the Middle Ages should omit any of the sins by forgetfulness.

May I here correct a misapprehension into which Professor Brown and some others have fallen, viz., that it was the theory of

<sup>1</sup> I see that Mr. Bradley has already made this point in his letter to the *Nation*, April 29, discussing Professor Brown's theory.

the "lost leaf" that led me "to re-examine the relation of the revised texts to the original form of the poem." On the contrary, as I stated in the first paragraph of my paper on the "Lost Leaf," it was in the summer of 1904 that I began to re-examine the relations of the texts and to feel that the stylistic differences were such as to make it hard to believe that they were the work of one man. In 1905 I undertook to study the relations of the texts with a class of graduate students and in the course of that study the theory of the "lost leaf" suggested itself as the most probable explanation of the confusion at A, V, 235, 236. My first thought was that a leaf had been skipped in copying at this point. Then I remembered the omission of Wrath from the Confessions, which, accompanied as it was by the similar omission of it from the Charter, had puzzled us sorely. The possibility of a single loss of a pair of leaves suggested itself as accounting for the two large faults; I made some calculations to see if the missing leaves would be parts of the same leaf, and found that they might. Several explanations of the difficulties had previously been canvassed both privately and in the classroom. I make this explanation not because I regard it as important that the actual order of my mental processes should be known, but because it seems to me that the striking character of the argument in regard to the "lost leaf" and other failures of B and C to understand their predecessors has fixed our attention too much on these external matters and too little on the very important questions of style, sentence structure, versification, visualization, use of imagery, interests, social and theological views, etc. I am perhaps as much to blame for this as anyone else, for I have merely indicated the nature of these differences without giving evidence. I may say in partial exculpation, that my pupils and I have made many studies and collected much material on most of these points, and hope some day to publish our results.

Had I seen Mr. Knott's excellent defense of my view in the *Nation*, May 13, 1909, before writing this paper, I would not have written this terminal note. But as it contains a few points not presented by him, I will let it stand as written, with the addition of the three sentences noted above as coming from him.

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## PIERS PLOWMAN, THE WORK OF ONE OR OF FIVE A REPLY

I ought perhaps to apologize for offering today a refutation of Professor Manly's refutation of my refutation of his refutation of the usually accepted ideas concerning *Piers Plowman*. In the new article published by him in *Modern Philology*, July, 1909, he announces further statements for the time when he shall have "found a method for presenting some of his results that satisfies him;" and he also complains that in my own article of January, 1909, the "arrangement of parts is skilfully devised to break such force as the arguments of the adversary may have when properly massed and valued."<sup>1</sup> To avoid censure, it would apparently be better to wait till he had himself massed all his arguments.

But, without forestalling what may pertain to the future, it is, I hope, not amiss to answer now what has been propounded up to now, and to state the reasons why, after having studied Professor Manly's new essay, I persist in my former belief. I shall content myself, for the time being, with making one general statement, and offering a series of remarks which I noted down as I read the attempted refutation.

### I

My general statement is to the effect that, in the maze of all those denyings and contestings, and those recurring assertions that

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 41 and 2.

the disputant has not understood or not quite understood his opponent, that his "new 'connecting link' is too weak to sustain even its own weight," that he has missed the point, etc., the reader may well miss the point too and forget what question is at stake and what Professor Manly has undertaken to prove.

As I recalled at the beginning of my first article, from the fourteenth century to the twentieth, *Piers Plowman*—a very characteristic poem, none truly like it—has been considered the work of one man; such testimonies as we possess are unanimous; there is not one to the contrary. Professor Manly does his best to diminish their value: not improbably, however, he would be glad if he had a tenth of it on his side, but it is a fact that he has none.

Such being the case, he comes forth with a theory of his own, which he must make good, and according to which *Piers Plowman* is not the work of any Langland at all, but was written by four different men; he even says five, but I persist in not counting John But and his few lines. These four men, having the same interest in the same problems, the same modesty, the same taste for anonymity, being all of them "men of notable intellectual power, and of ideas and aims of the same general tendency (notwithstanding individual differences)," being all of them "sincere men, interested primarily in the influence of their satire and finding themselves in hearty sympathy, despite minor differences, with the poem as it reached them" (pp. 2, 17), took up, we are told, the work in turn, remodeled it, each according to his own will, spoiling, in spite of their "notable intellectual power," many passages, and failing to understand others—the spoiling and failures being moreover of such grievous nature that a difference of authorship is thereby evidenced. Hence, of course, the necessity of admitting the remarkable phenomenon that each of those sincere men, of notable intellectual power, with a fondness for political and religious allegory, was careful to die, mothlike, as I said, just as he had "laid" his poem. Else, how would the sincere and clever predecessor have allowed his work to go about the world garbled, as we hear, mangled, and tagged with continuations not his own?—especially when a continuation had been contemplated from the first, and had even, as I have shown<sup>1</sup> been

<sup>1</sup> P. 7 of my article in *Modern Philology*, January, 1909.

foreshadowed in the part allotted by Professor Manly to the earliest of his supposed four poets.

If the garblings and failures to understand are so deep, great, and grievous as to denote a difference of authors, the surviving authors, one or two of them at least, would have given his own continuation, but none did. Professor Manly cannot say both that those faults and differences are so great as to demonstrate a difference of authorship, and that they are not so great as to have tempted any of his authors 1, 2, and 3 to protest and to set right the misdeeds of his authors 2, 3, and 4.

When Jean de Meun wrote his conclusion for the *Roman de la Rose*, Guillaume de Lorris was dead; when Sir W. Alexander wrote his for Sidney's *Arcadia*, Sidney was dead, and there could not be any protests. When Marti, on the contrary, gave his continuation of *Guzman de Alfarache*, Mateo Aleman was not dead, and he hastened to write and publish his own continuation. When the so-called Avellaneda issued, nine years after the first part of *Don Quixote*, a second one of his own making, Cervantes dropped the trifling works with which he had been busy, wrote with all speed his own continuation, expressed the bitterest indignation at the audacity of the intruder, and took care to kill *Don Quixote* outright in that second part, so as to be safe in the future.

All the chances are that, in order to have existed at all, Professor Manly's modest, sincere, and clever men must have died, with due punctuality, each after he had written, so as to make room for a successor and garbler: no small wonder.<sup>1</sup>

Given this self-assumed task, and the fact that there is not a trace of external evidence to support the theory of a quadruple authorship, the only sort of proof Mr. Manly can adduce is that resulting precisely from those mistakes, failures to notice or understand, spoilings of passages, differences in thoughts, meter, language and literary value. And he must, first, carefully separate what may be due to scribes and what to his several authors. I have pointed out how much, in the matter of dialect for example, may be due to scribes; the important article of Mr. R. W. Chambers and Mr. J. H. G.

<sup>1</sup> I again say nothing of John But about whom Professor Manly writes, "We hear of no protest" (p. 18). No one protested against him because no one heard of him. He could well in any case be let alone.

Grattan in the *Modern Language Review* of April, 1909, much better shows, not only that version B approximates more closely than was usually believed version A, but that, on the other hand, we are much further removed from the author's original text than was commonly supposed, several *layers* of MSS intervening between that text and those we possess: so that it is no easy matter to guess, in difficult passages, in questions of meter, dialect, etc., what is his and what may be due to what they rightly call an "editing scribe."

Professor Manly has to show, besides, that whenever, in the history of literature, such differences and mistakes as he thinks he detects, such spoilings or discardings of fine passages, have been found in the various versions or editions of a work, then, surely and invariably, a difference of author is the cause. If it can be pointed out that discrepancies as great exist between revisions or continuations of poems certainly due to the same author, his system falls through, for the discrepancies pointed out by him will be then no proof at all, and he has not two orders of proofs, he has only that one. This I consider the main point at stake, the keystone of the whole discussion.

It is not a little strange that, in his essays on the authorship of *Piers Plowman*, Mr. Manly entirely neglected this side of the question. He collected in the various versions of the poem as many mistakes and differences as he could, and without comparing them with any similar cases, drew outright from them his own conclusions, which are, as we know, of a very large order. I called attention, in my sections III and VIII, to some such parallel cases, showing how considerable differences in style, ideas, ways of thinking, meter, merit, etc., how grievous mistakes and lapsuses may be discovered in revisions or continuations certainly not due to a second, third, or fourth author, but to the original one.

I cannot help thinking that it is an inadequate answer for Professor Manly to say that, as for Ronsard, "he has not examined the revisions he made in his text" (p. 50), and that, as for *Robinson Crusoe*, he can speak only from a somewhat distant recollection, not having read it "since about 1891."

I had, to the same effect, quoted Tasso's two *Gerusalemme*, and these Mr. Manly has "examined with some care," but he has found



that, except for "the exclusion of many episodes and the systematic assimilation of the heroes to antique models," the second *Gerusalemme* is, if anything, better than the first, "usually richer and more powerful in style, more concise and more packed with meaning" (p. 52).

I shall not express any opinion of my own on the question of literary merit; my ways of thinking might differ somewhat widely from those of Professor Manly, for I see that the line added in version C of *Piers Plowman* and praised by me, in which Langland pictures himself as beholding, at the opening of his poem,

Al the welthe of this worlde and the woo bothe,

must have been, according to Mr. Manly, the work "fundamentally," not of a poet but of a "topographer" (p. 49). I certainly fail to detect the topographer. In the Tasso question, the best is, maybe, to abide by the judgment of critics who had no chance of being biased and auto-suggested by the present discussion, as they wrote before it: their verdict is not doubtful. Perhaps, however, it might be enough to recall that Mr. Manly himself recognizes, at least, that remarkable differences exist between the two *Gerusalemme*, and that there is in the second "a systematic assimilation of the heroes to antique models." When we remember the importance he attaches to a (quite imaginary, as I think) difference of merit in B's description of Wrath as compared to the other sins in A, there is nothing rash in surmising that he would have drawn a not insignificant argument in favor of a multiple authorship had he been so lucky as to find that the portraits of "Pernel proud herte" and Glotoun in version A, had been replaced by portraits of Juno and Bacchus in version B.

I may also add that, in this all-important question of comparisons,<sup>1</sup> I quoted just a few examples, but it would be easy to quote more: this is a ground which has as much to be cleared before we arrive at a conclusion, as the question of the "tabular presentation of statistics" which we are promised (p. 41), concerning sentence structure, versification, etc.—which presentation will have to be accompanied by a careful discrimination between what may be due to an "editing scribe" and to the author; and also and necessarily by a minute comparison with the remodelings by other writers of their own

<sup>1</sup> Cf. below, remark 16.

works, or by their publishing various works of their own at various periods and under different circumstances.

Such men as Rabelais, for example, will have to be remembered. His first editions are full of local and dialectal peculiarities of which no trace remains in his later revisions: "Rabelais," writes Mr. Baur, "issues in 1535 his *Gargantua*, the first edition of which seems to appeal to a public especially Lyonnese, being full of Lyonnese words and local allusions that he erased when his books reached universal fame."<sup>1</sup>

From the point of view of changes in political or philosophical ideals, such men will have to be discussed, too, as the one concerning whose *Odes* Sainte Beuve wrote: "At each page, a violent hatred against the Revolution, a frantic adoration of monarchical souvenirs, a frenzied faith more anxious for the martyr's palm than the poet's laurel." Victor Hugo must surely have been several men, since it is that staunch supporter of democracy whom Sainte Beuve could thus describe once in an article in the *Globe*.

Concerning the more or less suitable changes a poet may introduce in his work—plot, style, aim, etc.—when he writes three versions of it, account will have to be taken of authors whom we can speak of with certainty, because they are modern, and that we know exactly what occurred in their case, and whether they were one each or several.

A conspicuous example of a treble version has been recently studied by Mr. Christian Maréchal, who certainly never heard of the present controversy, and who writes of those three versions in words strangely similar to those used by Professor Manly with regard to *Piers Plowman*, except that he notices greater and more striking differences in the case of Lamartine and the various texts of his *Jocelyn*.

Three versions of this poem,<sup>2</sup> the two first left unfinished, have come down to us in manuscript. As first conceived, and as appears from the text of version I, the poem was to be short, with well-defined aims, no wanderings, imagination being held in check, a sense of measure governing the whole. Lamartine calls it at that time

<sup>1</sup> A. Baur, *Maurice Scève*, 1906, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Jocelyn inédit de Lamartine, d'après les manuscrits originaux* (the name of the hero is written thus in all the MSS), Paris, 1909, Introd. chap. ii, "Les trois Poèmes."

a *poemetto*, and says: “cela aura quatre chants,” of which we have two, but we possess the plan of the two others. His firm intention to continue it in the same style, and the pleasure he took in that style, are shown by a letter to his best friend, Count de Virieu, in which he writes: “This is my masterpiece; nothing of this sort will have been read before.”<sup>1</sup> A strong argument this, in favour of a multiple authorship in case changes were to occur; and they did.

In version II, grave alterations are noticeable; the poet, writes Mr. Maréchal, “is carried away by an inspiration, generous no doubt, but perhaps too rich, and of which, in any case, he is no longer the master.” The third canto now contains what was to be the conclusion of the second. He adds “fine episodic digressions for which there was no room in the first plan.” In this state, “the poem differs as much from the first version as from the last. It differs from the first by the abundance of descriptions . . . by the lack of equilibrium,” etc. It differs even more from the third, where the very groundwork of the poem, its religious and philosophical aim, are deeply altered. While the hero of the second version “reached religious resignation through his trials,” in the third he becomes “the man of nature . . . indomitably standing against religious and social order, to which he opposes his rights and whose victim he thinks he is.” The goal we thus reach is the antipodes of that for which we had started: the poet had begun with the intention of offering us a kind of soul’s tonic, and he leaves us “languid and weakened.”

Literary differences are no less glaring between the three versions. In the first text, the “sense of measure and proportion” is remarkable; indeed, far more so than in Langland’s version A. “The action,” says Mr. Maréchal, “proceeds and develops with a regularity which is reassuring and shows the poet ever the master of his inspiration. On the contrary, after the first part of the second epoch,” a word Lamartine chose, on second thoughts, instead of canto, as Langland chose *passus*, “description assumes disquieting proportions, and, from the fourth epoch especially, one feels that facility takes command and that discipline is silenced.” Far from checking himself, the author’s way of writing and composing becomes, as he

<sup>1</sup> Dec. 11, 1831, *ibid.*, p. xxviii.

proceeds, more and more loose. "This defect is especially perceptible in the truly extraordinary manner in which the ninth epoch is formed around a fragment originally written for the sixth, and under conditions such that Lamartine, while he wrote the several parts thereof, not only ignored the places those fragments would occupy with regard to each other, but even, as evidenced by the state of the manuscript, did not know whether they would end by forming a ninth epoch at all when put together." Version III is, to sum up, remarkable for "le relâchement de la forme."<sup>1</sup>

I cannot but recommend a study of these newly published documents to anyone who may be tempted to find proofs of a multiple authorship in Langland's changes of mood, style, merit, or thoughts. He will find that the changes are greater in Lamartine; and, as they occurred in the space of four years,<sup>2</sup> while it took Langland nine times longer to change much less, he will reach the conclusion that, if one of the two was several men instead of only one, it must have been Lamartine, not Langland.

## II

The remarks which I now beg to offer are the following ones:

1.—On the unique characteristics of Langland, I cannot but maintain word for word what I said, namely that "alone in Europe, and what is more remarkable, alone in his country, he gives us a true impression of the grandeur of the internal reform that had been going on in England during the century: the establishment on a firm basis of that institution unique then . . . the Westminster Parliament." I pointed out, in a previous work, that most of the aspirations of Langland can be paralleled by petitions of the Commons, and that no other poem offers anything of the kind, Chaucer having not even an allusion to the phenomenon, though having been himself a member of Parliament, and describing his Knight as having been one too.

This fact remains a fact. It will change nothing to show, as Mr. Manly says he will another day, that Alain Chartier gave (in the following century) "reasons for not admitting political discussion to his poetry but reserving it for prose" (p. 3). The example of

<sup>1</sup> Pp. xxviii, xxxiii, xlii, xlii.

<sup>2</sup> First version begun, November, 1831, third version finished, November, 1835.

Langland, and especially of Gower, who did admit political discussion in their poetry, was surely the one to have influenced Chaucer if he was to be influenced at all, but he was not. No "discussion," moreover, would have been needed for Chaucer to show that he had been impressed in some way by the colossal change that had occurred in his country, and in his country alone, in his days, before his very eyes: a word would have been enough, such a word as we find in Froissart, but he has it not. I stated this because it is so, and because it shows, with the rest, how Langland stands apart. The "implied criticism" of Chaucer which Mr. Manly thinks he detects in my words is quite out of the question.

2.—I persist in thinking that Langland was, as nearly as can be, uninfluenced and unbiased by foreign ideas, principles, and sentiments. By which I do not mean that no reminiscences of "French and Latin literature" (p. 3) can be found in his work: I pointed out myself a number of such reminiscences in my *Piers Plowman*, 1894.

3.—To ask (p. 3) whether I require the reader to "believe that Parliament had some esoteric doctrine, some high ideals of government kept secret from the people," is to lend me a hypothetical absurdity which I certainly never propounded. My plea has not only nothing to do with it but is the very reverse of it: the parliamentary changes were great and notorious; yet they found no echo in literature except in *Piers Plowman*, which by this stands alone.

How Marsiglio of Padua, the bold theorician of the first part of the fourteenth century, can be quoted (p. 4) to gainsay my statement, I fail to see. The question reflected in *Piers Plowman* is not one of theory, but one of actual and real practice, not of the first half of the fourteenth century (when that practice had not yet fully developed) but of the second; not of nations in general, but of England in particular. I say: Langland alone gives us a true impression of that English internal reform and of its grandeur—I am answered: do not forget Marsiglio of Padua who had abroad noteworthy theories before any such reform had been realized anywhere.

An argument is drawn (p. 4) from the fact that the fine line "might of the communes" etc. is spoiled in C. So it is, at least in such texts as have come down to us, but what of it? Langland, while writing in his old age the last revision of his work, sometimes

improved and sometimes spoiled it, just as was the case with Ronsard, Tasso, and others.

Professor Manly is afraid that I read into the passage "might of the communes" "very modern ideas" (p. 5), which would certainly be a grievous fault. But, without pleading that I have made for many years some study of the period and might perhaps be entitled to venture an opinion, I beg to point out that what Langland describes in these words, and what I say that he describes, is what actually took place in his days; and we have Professor Manly's own assurance that the doctrines thus condensed "were commonly and widely held among the people of England" (p. 3). I did not read anything either modern or otherwise into those lines, and scarcely did more than quote them.

Wonder is expressed thereupon (p. 5) at Langland having said nothing of the Peasants' revolt "in the poems" attributed to him: by which poems must doubtless be understood his last revision, written, as I think I showed, about 1398, that is seventeen years after the revolt, while the two other versions were written years before it. Professor Manly considers somehow that such a neglect points to a multiple authorship; this omission would be extraordinary if the three versions are by one author and quite natural if by four or five. It seems difficult to agree, especially when we remember that, according to the same critic, those four men had "ideas and aims of the same general tendency." If yet the question were maintained and we were asked to say why Langland did not mention the revolt, the answer would be: for the same cause that Shakespeare neglected to speak of "Magna Charta" in his account of a reign of which it was the most important event. Professor Manly merrily asks if Langland was "alone in England ignorant of [these things];" let him put the same question to Shakespeare.

4.—I had spoken of Langland as having his work "for his life's companion and confidant." Professor Manly answers (p. 6) that then his "carelessness and indifference concerning the condition in which his poem was published . . . is, to say the least, remarkable."—But it has nothing out of the common. Care for the work and care for the copies (and in our days for the proofs) of the work do not necessarily go together. Examples are not hard to find of people

who put their soul in their writings and who neglected to see that the copies going about were correct; the names of Shakespeare and Sidney will, I suppose, occur to everybody. Mr. Manly insists on the fact that I spoke of the Visions as being Langland's "continuous occupation," the subject of his "constant occupation," he being "constantly occupied with his text" (pp. 5, 7, 19). I never said that he was constantly occupied with the copies of his text—and besides I did not use at all, to any such intent, the words "constant," "constantly," "continuous."<sup>1</sup>

5.—Concerning scribes and what I had said of their possible mistakes, Professor Manly has recourse throughout his article to much irony and banter in order to persuade his readers that I attributed more than their due to "those careless professional scribes" to the "persistent carelessness of the scribes . . . [which] must have sorely irritated the professional soul of W. Langland" to that scribe who "is surely a most troublesome person."<sup>2</sup> This sort of *leit-motiv* recurs from place to place.

I have only to point out that, in their independent work, and after the most minute inspection of the *Piers Plowman* MSS that was ever made, Messrs. Chambers and Grattan lay to the door of "the careless scribe," much more than I ever did. "What Dr. Moore has," they say, "remarked of the early MSS of the *Divine Comedy*, is equally true of the MSS of *Piers Plowman*: their writers are not exact copyists, but editors, although working without an editor's sense of responsibility."<sup>3</sup> They show, moreover, that the best texts we possess have sometimes undergone twice in succession the revision of an editing scribe, so that we are necessarily, at times, rather far from the original composition. The two best MSS of A are the Vernon and the Harleian ones, of which our authors say that, not only they were edited by their scribes, but that "their common ancestor was also an edited MS." The same critics detect "sophistication" in certain texts of the Visions, and they do not refer it to the author or to several authors with a mangling disposition, but only to scribes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The only place where I find, in my article, the word "constantly" used with reference to this is at p. 17, where it comes in only to be qualified in the remark that Langland had "more or less constantly" beside him a text of his poem.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 7, 18, 35.    <sup>3</sup> *Modern Language Review*, April, 1909, p. 368.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378.

Professor Manly finds it "somewhat difficult to understand the relations [of these careless professional scribes] to Langland" (p. 7). He is very lucky if he finds it only somewhat difficult. Such relations, about which he has many jokes, are one of the hardest problems of mediæval literature. The best authority in such matters pronounces it "insoluble." We can only make suppositions, but we can make more probable ones than those Professor Manly playfully recommends to our acceptance; either that in which he gives to the author's wife and daughter a part to play, or that according to which "the admiration and interest of [amateur copyists] would have led them to ask the author where these loose slips and fly-leaves belonged" (p. 7).—They would in fact never have asked, because they would never have noticed. In such an irregular work, discrepancies are not very striking: and they struck no one, in fact, neither scribe, printer, nor literary critic, for five centuries, until Professor Manly himself pointed out two or three (and I one more).

Some of the reasoning in the same paragraph is difficult to follow, more difficult to accept. "Were the scribes," Professor Manly asks, p. 7, "paid by other men who had read or heard of the poem and wished copies for themselves? If [this] be assumed, what becomes of the mystery in which the author enveloped his identity?"—As if it were an extraordinary phenomenon, an unheard-of thing, that an anonymous poem, or one whose author is but doubtfully known, may have become famous and the copies sought for.

In the same paragraph again we are referred to C, XIV, 117 ff., with the intent of showing that Langland evinces there his aversion for the scribe who copies carelessly, and that he would therefore have keenly resented the misdeeds of any such when his own work was at stake—just as if he had been another Chaucer. But in that passage, Langland simply enumerates what defects make a "chartre chalangible" before the courts;<sup>1</sup> it is a very special case, as far removed as can be from the copying of poetical MSS, and it is very bold to deduce from it conclusions as to the poet's personal views about

<sup>1</sup>A charter is chalangible ' by-fore a chief Justice,  
Yf fals Latyn be in that lettere' the lawe hit enpugneth,  
Other peynted par-entrelignarie' parcels over-skipped;  
The gome that so gloseth chartres' a goky is yholden.  
So is he a goky by god' that in the godspel failleth.



scribes in general, and about the trouble he must have taken to personally correct the copies made of his own work.

Such an attitude as Langland's has nothing wonderful. Cervantes knew of the criticisms made as to the strange way in which the stealing of Sancho's ass is narrated in the first part of *Don Quixote*; he wrote a kind of defense nine years later, but does not seem to have troubled himself in the interval to verify how the text stood that had been so criticised, and it is very difficult to make his reply fit (as shown below, remark 16) either those criticisms, or the passages doubtfully his, or even those certainly written by himself. Yet he was not indifferent to his work; far from it, as his indignation against the author of a sham continuation sufficiently shows.

Referring, p. 8, to MSS Univ. Coll. Oxford, and Rawlinson Poet. 137 which contain a "jumble of incoherent facts" (read patches; Mr. Manly's own scribe must have betrayed him), Professor Manly objects, that "the confusion was not in the author's MS, but in a later copy." I quite agree and ever did, and do not see how my words can be taken to mean that I believed the scribes to have had, in this case, Langland's autograph in their hands. My words were to the effect that the two MSS in question were copied "from the same original which offered a good text," though the leaves had been disarranged, and this certainly does not point to the author's autograph. I had quoted this example in a note,<sup>1</sup> simply to recall to what extent scribes *could* carry carelessness and indifference to sense: there were, as the event shows, scribes negligent enough to issue such copies without noticing their absurdity; any text given men of their stamp with leaves or slips in a wrong order would be copied by them unflinchingly wrong. Such accidental misplacings as might happen in Langland's own MS (and it so turns out that, judging by the result, they were neither numerous nor glaring and easy to detect) would pass unnoticed by scribes like these, and by many of their betters.

6.—There is, in Professor Manly's article, a good deal of discussion (pp. 9 ff.) concerning what I said of Langland's allowing copyists to transcribe his work at various moments when it was in the making. I am quite willing to wait till Messrs. Chambers and Grattan have finished their inspection of the MSS. But whatever may be thought

<sup>1</sup>Note 3, p. 4 of my article. Cf. Chambers and Grattan, *ut supra*, p. 376.

or discovered with respect to each of the separate examples I quoted, the author did, at all events, to a notable extent, what I said, as his poem was indeed ever in the making, and as, when text A was allowed to be copied, the poem was not finished; when B was made public it was not finished either, and when C appeared the work was left definitively incomplete.

I continue firmly convinced that, from the first, the author had in his mind, as the subject of his work, the three episodes that are in it (the last being left unfinished), namely the episodes of Meed, of Piers, and of Dowel-Dobet-Dobest; and that, contrary to what Professor Manly alleges (p. 12), the A text was not, in the poet's thought, a complete whole. Various mentions in A of Dobet and Dobest are quoted by Professor Manly to sustain his theory, but we find nothing there save a preparation for what was to follow at a later period, and it is only of Dowel that we really hear in that version. The rubrics in MSS seem to me to give a correct idea of what was planned by the author as early as version A. At the end of passus viii, where we had first become acquainted with Dowel, we read: "Incipit Vita de Do-wel, Do-bet et Do-best," and it cannot be pretended that A gives us thereupon anything more than the "Vita de Do-wel." In other words, three so-called lives were contemplated, but people, when A was copied and made public, got only one. There was, for the author, a continuation to write, and he wrote it later.

7.—I had said that the Visions exist: "That they were written by someone cannot be considered a rash surmise. Of that one we know little, but that little is considerably better than nothing, better than in the case of more than one mediaeval work of value." Mr. Manly asks thereupon: "What of the logical process by which we pass to the assumption that someone is some *one*?" (p. 13). There is in my sentence no such trickery as Mr. Manly thinks he has discovered: the meaning is, I believe, clear and justifiable enough; and that meaning is, as made evident by the text, that those Visions did not write themselves; and that we know something—not much but yet something—of one, and only one, who is one indeed and not five, judging by all the notes, allusions and references that we possess about him, and which I thereupon enumerate—of one who actually did write the Visions.

8.—Continuing, Professor Manly writes:

But, says Mr. Jusserand, for the unity of authorship of these poems and for the name of the author, we have abundant evidence. In the first place, "without exception, all those titles" . . . (etc.). But here, as often, Mr. Jusserand insists upon arguing concerning B and C, when the question at issue concerns the A text. The old habit of regarding A, B, and C as inseparable, even for the purposes of study, is too strong (p. 13). Rash assertions, lack of method, persistency in following a wrong course: many faults are thus laid at my door. What is there in all these accusations?—Exactly nothing. First, I did not use at all the word "abundant," but I maintain that what we have is much better than nothing, especially as, in my judgment, no evidence of any weight has been, up to now, produced against it. As for the misdeed of arguing about one version when the question at issue concerned another, the inaccuracy of such a statement is easily demonstrable. In that part of my essay, I had been explaining that the complete poem, with the three episodes of Meed, Piers, and Dowel-Dobet-Dobest had been in the author's mind from the first, from the time indeed when he wrote version A, even from the time when he wrote what Professor Manly considers as the first part of A, that is the first eight passus. These three episodes had, from the earliest moment and ever after, formed, I believe, one whole. To show this I *first* examined, quite apart, p. 7 of my essay, what an inspection of the text of version A had to tell us on this side of the problem; *secondly* I passed on, p. 8, to a different consideration, viz., to an examination of what bearing the titles, colophons, and marginal notes in whatsoever MSS of the poem, might have on this question and on the question of authorship. The two examinations, the two demonstrations, are quite apart. Professor Manly ignores the first, and coming to the second (about which he says, "In the first place"), declares that I "insist" upon mixing irrelevant questions, "as often," led astray by "the old habit," etc. This way of reasoning is not, I consider, to be commended.

9.—Professor Manly contests (p. 15) that the line:

I have lyved in londe, quod I· my name is longe Wille,  
—B, XV, 148.

gives us, as a note in MS Laud 581 asserts, "the name of thauctour" (if there was any note of this sort alluding to several authors,

it would not perhaps be treated so lightly, but there is none). He alleges that it might be analogous to the American saying: "I'm from Missouri, you'll have to show me." It is troublesome for him that the same author, as I persist in considering him, who says here, "My name is longe Wille," says elsewhere that he was really and actually "long" of stature: "to long . . . lowe for to stoupe" (C, VI, 24), which connects him again with the words "longe Wille," used as a surname or nickname to designate him. Mr. Manly has, in any case, to confess that he knows of no "other" example where the words Long Will are taken with the ironical sense he suggests: it is a great pity, because just a second example would have helped us so much to believe in the first.

10.—The value of John Bale's notice concerning Langland is, of course, reduced to a minimum by Professor Manly (p. 16). I know very well that Bale is not infallible; he brings, however, in favour of the system I adhere to, the weight, such as it is, of a learning and love of English letters which were not of the lowest order; and I suppose again, as in the case of the notes in MSS, that if he had made even a vague allusion to the possibility of a multiple authorship, Professor Manly would not have disdained making good use of his statement.

11.—Coming to John But, Professor Manly writes: "John But's continuation, slight as it is, is of importance, because it shows that men did not hesitate to continue or modify a text that came into their hands" (p. 17). One might write just as well: John But's continuation, slight as it is, is of importance because it shows that "men" who wrote a continuation did not hesitate to give their name. Mr. Manly says that But signed "out of vanity;" his four other authors had no vanity and did not sign: they were indeed, in this too, the perfect image of one another.

12.—Concerning the Seven Deadly Sins, I consider that what I said in my section III still holds good. In his desire to show in A certain merits not to be found elsewhere, so that he might conclude the authors of the rest must have been different, Professor Manly had written of the description of the Deadly Sins in A: "Each is sketched with inimitable vividness and brevity."<sup>1</sup> Without insisting

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History of English Literature*, II, p. 15.

on the question of the brevity of "each" (one of the sins has 76 lines, another 5), I had pointed out that such a statement was quite unfounded, the "inimitably vivid" portrait of Lechery in A being as follows:

Lechour seide 'allas!' and to ur ladi criede  
 To maken him han merci' for his misdede,  
 Bitwene god almihti' and his pore soule,  
 With-that he schulde the Seterday' seven ȝer after  
 Drinken bote with the doke' and dynen but ones.

—A, V, 54.

While now gainsaying his first statement and admitting that one "may feel regret that we have no such portraits of [Lechour and Sloth] as we have of Envy, Coveitise and Glotoun" (p. 20), Professor Manly maintains that this passage, in which Lechour contents himself with promising, in fact, not to be Glotoun, is not so unsatisfactory after all: "The only other remedies mentioned in the *Parson's Tale* are continence itself and eschewing the company of the tempter." It cannot but strike Professor Manly himself that, in forgetting this, the author of A, described by him as having such a "capacity for artistic and orderly development" (p. 2) has forgotten the main point, for, if I dare risk an opinion, continence is a better "remedy" for lechery than to drink water on Saturdays. As for the query (p. 20) whether the difference of treatment of the sins, some getting such a masterful portrait as Coveitise or Glotoun, and others receiving such a one as Lechour, is not due to "an artistic purpose" on the part of the author of A, I shall take the liberty of answering nothing.

13.—On the question of the names of the wife and children of Piers, I also adhere to what I formerly said. Mr. Manly objects (p. 22, and cf. p. 10) to my having lightly mentioned those lines in a footnote. I did so because that note was devoted to other examples of the same sort. But I solemnly promise that, if I ever reprint my article, I shall put what I have to say thereon in the text. I shall even show, by at least one more example, how manipulations of an author's manuscript may pass unnoticed by him, without his being two authors. I shall show and confess how this may happen even in our own modern days, even to one who has no less a task

before him than to carry on polemics with Mr. Manly. When the MS of my previous article on the *Piers Plowman* problem was returned to me with proofs, I found that my text had been submitted to a reader or corrector who had taken with it not a few liberties. As his corrections had been made in red ink in my autograph manuscript, it should have been very easy to re-correct what I did not approve of. But what gave me a shudder and made me think of old Langland, who did not have the same reasons as I to be attentive, is that in one place, the reader had, for reasons known only to himself, carried part of a sentence of mine into a quotation from *Piers Plowman*. That bit of plain prose had accordingly been printed as verse: it did not alliterate; the red mark of the corrector was very visible in the MS; yet I read my set of proofs twice without noticing the absurdity. On a last reading, I perceived and corrected it. I have preserved the MS, and the sheet is an interesting proof of what not only a "careless scribe" of the middle ages, but an attentive reader of modern times may do, and the interested author twice overlook.

14.—In the discussion concerning the misplaced Robert the Robber passage, I had mentioned that, in order to make it fit somehow the (wrong) place where he put it, the early copyist of A, to whom we owe the mistake, changed the words, "He highte ȝyuan," which were apparently in the original, into, "And ȝit I-chulle." Professor Manly does not think the scribe can have done any such thing: "Was Adam [Scrivener] then," he asks, "so sleepy that he could not see that lines 236-41 could not possibly be attached to Sloth, and yet so wide awake that he rewrote the first line?" My answer is that, for changing those three words (not the whole line), the scribe needed not be so very wide awake; while he would have been prodigiously so if he had noticed a misplacing of the whole passage, which escaped the notice of critics for centuries. It may also be recalled that, as Middleton observed, "Fools are not at all hours foolish—no more than wise men wise."

If to move the Robert the Robber passage to its proper place would have been a wonder in a scribe, it would have been, of course, more than natural in the author, when he had once noticed the mistake. Langland noticed it when he wrote his version C and corrected it. Professor Manly does not want him to have done so, and

he alleges (p. 22) that it is, in any case, very extraordinary that he did not do it before, as he had "five" occasions to correct the error—"five I say, and I emphasize it."—Mr. Manly pictures to himself a Langland who must have been (an idea all his own) full of care for the copies of his text; he believes apparently that each time the poet allowed one to be made, he must have carefully re-read his original, and doubtless compared the copy with it, in order to correct any mistake that might have crept into either. In this way would he have lost those five occasions emphasized as before said. But this is, on the part of Mr. Manly, a mere supposition, and the probabilities are quite the other way. The writer who left, in *each* of his three versions, at least one incorrect list of the Seven Deadly Sins, was not likely to take so much trouble. That he was not the man to read and revise the copies made of his text, is shown besides, not only by the state of the B version, with Robert the Robber left at the wrong place, but by that of the A version too. Mr. Manly recognizes in the author of that version (and he wants to differentiate him thereby from his supposed two or three successors, more addicted to vagaries), a man of "unerring hand," who "never himself forgets for a moment the relations of any incident to his whole plan," etc.<sup>1</sup> This should be the man, if any, to read and revise the copies made of his work. Yet he did not, as in each and all of the numerous MSS we have of A, the Robert the Robber passage is uniformly where it should not be.

If, on the other hand, as noted before, the author had remodeled the Robert the Robber passage when writing version B, as he remodeled innumerable others, and yet, in spite of his having worked at it, had left it at the wrong place, this would have been a strong presumption in favor of the multiple authorship theory. But it so happens that he did nothing of the sort, and the few verbal differences pointed out by Mr. Manly, these "minutiae" as he calls them himself (p. 23), are of the insignificant kind which can be safely referred to the scribe.

15.—I had quoted some examples to show that what had happened to Langland had also happened to others who were unquestionably one man each and not five, and who, besides, were no dreamers and

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History*, II, p. 5.

writers of allegories. Professor Manly makes light of the Roosevelt example. The former President, owing to his use of slips and to his having had two on the same subject, printed twice the same thing on the same page, read several proofs and gave several editions of his work before noticing at last the mistake, unobserved till then by all critics. Professor Manly finds this sort of thing quite intelligible on Mr. Roosevelt's part (p. 23) and quite unbelievable on the part of Langland; a judgment, the reverse of what one would have expected. He points out that, in the case of the *American Hunter*, there was nothing but a repetition of the same statement—on the same page it may be recalled, so that it should have caught the eye—but yet only a repetition. If Mr. Roosevelt or his printer had allowed, in the second of his parallel statements, “a rhinoceros to stroll into the village of the prairie dogs,” he would have noticed the error. According to Mr. Manly, the mistake, uncorrected by Langland in version B of his text (but noticed and corrected in C), is of the rhinoceros kind.

But most obviously it is not, since it remained, as we know, unobserved by printers, critics, and historians for 500 years. If it had been of the rhinoceros type, somebody or other would have noticed it. This increases Mr. Manly's merit in having discovered the mistake, but does not diminish, far from it, the force, value, and appropriateness of the example I quoted.

16.—Another was mentioned by me, Cervantes being the subject thereof. Professor Manly does not accept the interpretation I had given (not on my own authority, but on that of many) of Cervantes' afterthought concerning the theft of Sancho's ass, of how a leaf or slip of his text apparently went astray, and how he failed, though he also had many “occasions” to do so, to set matters straight, and give a plausible text. Mr. Manly prefers the interpretation of the problem given by Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly. He is most welcome; I have myself no reason not to prefer it too.

This high authority's account of Cervantes' temper and peculiarities as an author, peculiarities bringing about consequences strangely similar to what we notice in Langland's case, shows that I ought to have insisted rather more than less on this example—

The construction is, of necessity, loose, the proportions unsymmetrical, the incident a farrago of hazard and whim. Written by fits and



starts, in snatches stolen from less congenial work, it has too often an effect of patchiness; over-elaboration and insufficiency of outline are flaunted side by side. The supplementary stories, not all triumphs in themselves, are worked in at random, with no special relevancy. . . . Chronology, method, accuracy were no hobgoblins of . . . .

—thus does Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly write, not of Langland, but of Cervantes.<sup>1</sup> Of the latter he says also, with respect to certain inconsistencies in his text, that, “no doubt, his memory was sometimes at fault,” which may well have been the case with Langland, too. Cervantes’ intention had first been “to write a short comic story, but the subject mastered him and forced him to enlarge the scope of his original design”—a not unfrequent happening, as shown by Lamartine and his *Jocelyn* and, as we think, Langland and his *Piers Plowman*. “It is curious to reflect,” Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly continues, “that Sancho Panza is himself an afterthought. . . . So late as the ninth chapter we read of a Sancho with ‘long shanks’—a squire inconceivable!” If Sancho was an afterthought, and one imperfectly worked into the text, well may the case have been the same with Robert the Robber too. Though one author and not several, Cervantes offers, here and there, remarkable differences in merit and style: “At his best . . . he is a perfect, unsurpassable master. . . . When his attention flags, he sinks at moments into an almost slovenly obscurity.”<sup>2</sup>

Dealing with the incident of the stealing by Gines de Pasamonte of the ass which Sancho is nevertheless found riding immediately after,<sup>3</sup> Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s interpretation is as follows:

It is plain that Cervantes’ MS must have contained an account of Gines de Pasamonte’s rascality. How this account came to be omitted from the first edition can only be conjectured. . . . The conception was an afterthought and may well have been written down on a loose sheet of paper which was accidentally lost.<sup>4</sup>

For such things will happen.

<sup>1</sup>*The Historie of Don Quizote . . . translated by T. Shelton, with Introduction by Fitzmaurice-Kelly*, London, 1896, Vol. I, p. xxviii.

<sup>2</sup>*Complete Works of Cervantes—Don Quizote—ed. by Fitzmaurice-Kelly, translated by J. Ormsby*, Glasgow, 1901, Vol. I, pp. xvi, xxxlii.

<sup>3</sup>In the first edition there is no account of the stealing of the ass, but we suddenly find Sancho making mournful allusions to his loss of it, as if we knew how it had happened. In the second and following editions figures the passage under discussion, telling of the theft

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xv.

Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly thinks that, owing to some mishap of this sort, the first edition appeared, as it did, with two unintelligible allusions to the theft as having taken place, whereas no account of the actual deed had been given. This discrepancy being noticed by the publisher, he caused the gap to be filled by someone who was not Cervantes, and the filling was inserted by mistake at the wrong place, so that Sancho still rides, for some time, the stolen ass (other commentators are of a different opinion and even consider that the addition, which they attribute to the author himself, is of "extraordinary value").

Contemporary critics made fun of the mistake and derided the author. Cervantes was aware of it; he was also proud of his work and of its success (five editions in less than seven months); he had circulated in it MS before it was printed, and we know that he keenly resented the intrusion of a continuator. Yet he let things go, and he cared no more for the copies of his work than Langland did for those of his own; he never gave the right text, he never asked his printer to put at least the interpolation (supposing it to be one) at the right place; and the curious discrepancies in his text were allowed to stay.

Stranger still, when, nine years after the first, he gave his second part, he showed in chapters 3, 4, and 27, that he was aware something was wrong in the first part, and that it had been made fun of by certain people. He offered, by the mouth of Sancho in chapter 4, a half serious, half jocose answer—a very curious answer which shows that, even then, well aware he had been criticised, proud as he was of his work and of its success, ready, as he proved further on, to resent an intruder's tamperings, he had not taken the trouble to ascertain how the passage of his own text which he had to discuss, really stood. His apologetic remarks do not exactly fit any of the versions of the same. The objection he gives himself to answer is that he had forgotten "to say who the thief was who stole Sancho's Dapple, for it is not stated there, but only to be inferred from what is set down, that he was stolen; and a little farther we see Sancho mounted on the same ass without its having turned up."<sup>1</sup>

This cannot apply to the second edition nor to the following ones,

<sup>1</sup> Part ii, chap. 3.

since the passage, said to be interpolated, had been added into them with full explanations as to the stealing of the ass by Gines de Pasamonte mentioned by name. It does not apply any better to the first edition where we gather only, by two passing allusions of Sancho's, that his ass must have been stolen; where there is no account, either of the stealing or the recovery of the animal; and where it is not "a little farther," but much later in the story, that Sancho is actually seen with his ass again. The words "a little farther" fit, on the contrary, very well all the other editions where, ten lines after the account of the theft, we find Sancho "seated sideways, woman fashion, on his ass."<sup>1</sup>

Carelessness, inattention, forgetfulness when his great work was in question; over-elaboration and insufficiency of outline appearing side by side; afterthoughts insufficiently worked into the text; parts that are masterful and others of "an almost slovenly obscurity;" indifference as to the copies or editions of his own text, a misplaced leaf remaining definitively misplaced in spite of all the occasions to correct the error (a publisher who took the trouble of having the gap filled by a third party would have welcomed, at any time, the author's own rectification)—all this and more we find in the case of Cervantes who, in spite of it all, was one single author and not several.

17.—Professor Manly objects (p. 24) to my suggestion that the lines C, IX, 84–91 are one more example of a misplaced passage. I expressed the opinion that this added speech of Piers must have, in reality, made part of his address to the Knight. Professor Manly thinks that it should stay where it is, and must be directed to Piers's own son. But Piers's son is not supposed to be present at all, only his name being given in the sort of parenthesis inserted into the Plowman's speech. As for the "unlikelihood that," as Mr. Manly says, "the peasant Piers would assume this tone with the Knight and call him 'dere sone'" (p. 25), it is scarcely necessary to recall that Piers, far from appearing there as a "peasant" pure and simple, had been given by the poet the part of leader, and had undertaken to show to all classes of society the way to truth, the Knight having personally acknowledged the old man's leadership.

<sup>1</sup> Part i, chap. 23.

18.—“Furthermore,” Professor Manly continues, “if Mr. Jussekand accepts Professor Skeat’s view that MS Laud 581 was corrected by the author himself, or perhaps indeed his own autograph, it is worth observing . . . ” (p. 26). No conclusion whatever should be drawn from such a surmise, restated more than once; I certainly never said a word in my article implying that I adhered to a hypothesis which, I believe, Professor Skeat does not himself adhere to any more.

19.—What I said on the Robert the Robber passage,<sup>1</sup> on its being rightly put, in C, at the place where it belonged from the first, on the “much lauded Welshman” (why “much lauded,” and what does that mean?), I strictly maintain; let the reader weigh the evidence. I certainly fail to see that C, as Professor Manly contends, far from improving the text, changed, at the beginning of the passage, a simple and grammatical sentence into a monster “neither the flesh of a name nor the fish of a promise, a ghastly amphibian,” etc., (p. 27). C, we are asked to believe, removed the Robber passage from a place where it made nonsense, only to put it at another where it does not fit, just what could be expected from one who was not the original author and knew no better. C, moreover, introduced in the first description of the sins (B, V; C, vii) a number of passages borrowed from other parts of text B, “And it seems clear that C had no better reason for his transfer of the Robber passage than for his transfer of the others” (p. 28). In other words, he had no good reason for either, he acted arbitrarily (not to say nonsensically): what else could be expected, since he was not the original author?—But he *was*, and acted quite sensibly, having excellent reasons in both cases for doing what he did, namely, putting the Robber passage at a place which is, I maintain, the only one for which it can have been written, and for suppressing, by the other changes, one of the descriptions of the Deadly Sins (the one in B, XIII, spots on the coat of Haukyn), two of them being fused into one. Langland felt, when writing C, and this is a not unique proof of good taste given by him when making this revision, that those descriptions were too numerous and that one could disappear with advantage.

20.—Speaking of the “much lauded Welshman,” *ȝyvan ȝeld-aȝeyn*,

<sup>1</sup>Section III of my previous article, pp. 14 ff.

otherwise Reddite, Professor Manly contests the identification which I proposed of the two, though the text itself makes it plain. I had pointed out that this peculiar device (an abstract Latin word figuring also in the poem as a live being) was not used by Langland in this place only, and that what we find here in C, we had found before in A, even in what Professor Manly considers as the first part of A, the work of the earliest of his four authors.<sup>1</sup> On this he offers no remark.

21.—Professor Manly having, like many before him, noticed the absence of Wrath in the description of the Seven Deadly Sins in A, V, drew from this conclusions of considerable magnitude. It seemed to him that to forget one of the sins was an impossibility; the author of the first part of A especially, that precise mind who has, he thinks, “definiteness” for his characteristic and is described as so different from B, who is incapable of “consecutive thinking,” cannot possibly have made such an omission. He must have written a description of Wrath, but it must have been lost, and the lost half-leaf must have been the counterpart of another half-leaf where the poet must have written a long passage (long indeed it must have been) to properly connect the confession of Sloth with that of a thief.

Langland himself supplies the answer, for he did not omit Wrath in one list of the Seven Sins in A, but in two; so that, whatever may be the case with others, such omissions were certainly possible to him, and this is enough to seriously shake our belief in the lost half-leaf; for the poet really *could* forget a sin.

More than that, as I pointed out, what took place in the B and C revisions is, so far as it goes, evidence of a single and not a multiple authorship. This omission of one of the sins, by an author giving a description of them, “incredible” says Professor Manly (p. 31), nearly impossible as it is, is yet made in his turn by the author of B just as by the author of A, and by that of C just as by that of B; which reveals a strange similarity in the foibles of Professor Manly’s “several men of notable intellectual power.” This neither he, nor anyone, I believe, had ever observed. Yet it is a fact that B, while he notices the absence of Wrath and adds him in the two places where he was missing in A, when he has to draw up one more list himself, draws

<sup>1</sup>P. 23 of my article.

it wrong, forgetting Envy. C leaves this same list incomplete, with Envy still lacking. The more "incredible" such doings, the more symptomatic of a unique authorship.

Let the reader value as he may think fit the explanation now offered by Professor Manly. His explanation is that such omissions, so extraordinary in A as to justify, he considers, the belief in a hypothetical lost leaf, are very natural when B is in question. Better still, they were purposely made, they were made for "some particular reason," for a reason "not hard to discover" (p. 30), and that reason is one of art and logic: an unexpected reason, to say the least, when we remember Mr. Manly's denunciation of B's "incapacity for organized and consecutive thinking," and his "tendency to rambling and vagueness," especially "in the third vision,"<sup>1</sup> the one presently under consideration. Anyhow, Professor Manly's reason "not hard to discover" is to the effect that the author there enumerates the Deadly Sins, just to show that Poverty is not liable to them, and that Envy is appropriately omitted because Poverty cannot be considered as immune from it. But, if the reason imagined by Professor Manly were accepted (to the great credit of B's capacity for "organized and consecutive thinking"), Wrath should have been omitted as well as Envy, for Poverty is as liable to the one as to the other. For what cause, besides, just before they draw up their incomplete list, B as well as C is careful to point out that they are presently dealing with the 'sevene synnes that there ben' (B, XIV, 201), and to repeat once more that the "sevene synnes" are their theme (B, XIV, 218), Mr. Manly no less carefully abstains from explaining.

My own explanation, if I may venture one, is that Langland *could* omit sins in his lists, and that the three versions are by him.

22.—On the respective merits of the portrait of Wrath added by B (so unsatisfactory, according to Professor Manly, as to denote a different author) and of the portraits of the sins in A, I cannot but repeat what I said, and what I said was to the effect that, when Professor Manly stated that, in A, each sin was sketched "with inimitable vividness," he misstated the case. Let anyone who doubts read again, for example, the sketch of Lechour quoted above (remark 12). Wrath is certainly not more unsatisfactory in B than some

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History*, pp. 23, 24.

others in A, and it is difficult to understand how Professor Manly can allege that, in A, "Lechour is the lecherous man," while, in B, Wrath (represented "with two whyte eyen, and nyvelyng with the nose, and his nekke hangyng") is "in no sense the wrathful man" (p. 33). Both descriptions should be read together, without forgetting that I have shown that those attributes of Wrath in B, which Professor Manly had chosen to consider so very irrelevant, are, on the contrary, the usual, commonplace, classical ones, given to that sin by the mediæval manuals of greatest authority. Professor Manly pretends that I "tried to answer his charge" by saying "that Envy and Wrath are so much alike that B cannot justly be criticized for giving us a portrait of Envy and labeling it Wrath" (p. 32). Yet, in spite of what Mr. Manly writes there, and repeats, p. 33, I never committed myself in such grave matters; I never presumed to say that Envy and Wrath are either alike or different; I only did what I supposed was right: I quoted contemporary texts giving what was then the accepted opinion, of more importance on those questions than mine or that of Professor Manly. I quoted some lines from the *Parson's Tale*, and might have quoted many more to the same effect, those, for example, where the Parson declares that there are three sources for "Ira," namely Pride, Envy, "and thanne stant the sinne of contumelie or stryf and cheeste," on which precisely B insists. Chaucer's Ira "stryveth eek alday agayn trouthe"—"lesynges I ymped," says Langland's Wrath in B (V, 138).

23.—Professor Manly's remark that, if there is a great difference of style between the Parson's tale and the Miller's (the author being nevertheless only one man), the cause must be that Chaucer was influenced by his original (p. 34), does not destroy my argument. It shows that, under certain influences, an author may use very different styles, and yet continue to be one and not several; those influences may come, not only from a difference of original, but a difference of time, disposition, and subject.

24.—The question of the supposed mistakes or failures to understand their supposed predecessors, attributed by Professor Manly to his several authors, is by him studied again. I persevere in my views, and referring the reader to the article in which I have developed them, I shall only offer the following observations:

In B, Professor Manly had said, "Lewte is introduced as the leman of the Lady Holy Church and spoken of as feminine." My answer, I deem, holds good: Leman meaning a "tenderly loved being of either sex," I do not see why Mrs. Lewte would not be for Lady Holy Church, just as well as Mr. Lewte would have been, a leman, or tenderly loved being. I maintain also that the only proof of B having made of Lewte a feminine personage is that, at one place, we read "hire" instead of "him," and that this is in truth no proof at all. Professor Manly cannot reconcile himself to the thought that a scribe may have been guilty of such a blunder—consisting in the change of one letter (and corrected in C). Since the change creates, according to him, nonsense, he considers that it must necessarily come from the author! To "relieve" the author of the responsibility arbitrarily laid thus on his shoulders, Mr. Manly wants "something in the text to indicate that 'hire' is a scribe's error" (p. 35). I make bold to say that this is asking too much.

25.—Professor Manly had said also, in order so show that we had to do with several authors, that in B, "Fals instead of Wrong is father of Meed, but is made to marry [*i. e.* to prepare to marry] her later." I continue to think that, here too, B is not guilty, and that the passage was improved, not spoiled, by him. If Wrong was to be at all the father, he should have been made to play a more important part than he does in A, where, so long as the marriage is in question, he does nothing, but awakens from his torpor later in a completely different episode (IV, 47 ff.) in which he entirely ceases to be alluded to as the father of Meed, though Meed is present and plays also a part in the incident: all this, in that A text, the work, we are told, of a man of "unerring hand," who "never himself forgets for an instant the relation of any incident to his whole plan."<sup>1</sup> No less than B and C, A was fallible.

It may be observed, on the other hand, that, according to Professor Manly, Meed was such "a desirable bride" that her father did not need to do anything in order to secure a husband for her: hence, we are told, his inactivity; the same authority finds, however, quite natural that a portion be nevertheless provided for her, not by her father, but by a friend. It seems to me that B followed the

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History*, p. 5.



dictates of common sense in suppressing useless Wrong in this episode and in giving Favel for both a father and portion-provider to Meed.

As for Fals having been written at one place for Favel in B, I pointed out that similar slips of the pen occur at different places in the *three* texts. Mr. Manly ironically insists, as usual, on that "most troublesome person" the scribe, on that "careless or meddling scribe," so as to give the impression that I attribute too much to copyists. But such is not the case, and besides I do not do it to the extent he is pleased to say. In this case, in particular, I did not attribute the blunders in question specifically and exclusively to the scribe, and Mr. Manly might have remembered that what I wrote was: "Such slips of the pen would have been difficult for any copyist and even for any author to avoid, in such a passage as this, with so many lines alliterating in *f*, and Favel fair speech, and Fals fickle tongue constantly succeeding one another" (p. 34 of my article). The same might very well happen also to more than one of us, and I could quote as many examples as might be deemed necessary.

26.—I shall not continue further the discussion of the supposed misdeeds of B, but shall only state that I persist in pleading not guilty for him all along the line, being unable to understand how, for example, Professor Manly can seriously ask "whether any student of *Piers Plowman* ever clearly recognized that [the] feoffment (in B, II, 74 ff) is intended to cover 'precisely the provinces of the Seven Deadly Sins,' before acquaintance with the simpler form of the A text enabled him to perceive the plan overlaid by the elaborations of B and C" (p. 39). The so-called "elaborations" which "overlay" the original plan, fill, all told, *ten* lines more in B than in A; and B can even claim that he has a right to more room than was used before, as the "simpler form of the A text" was really too simple, one of the sins having been forgotten in that version.

27.—On questions of dialect and versification, Professor Manly asks us to wait; let us. It cannot be unfair, however to note, in the meanwhile, that Miss Mary Deakin's study of the *Alliteration in Piers Plowman* has led her to the conclusion that, to all appearances, "the alliteration gives no support to Professor Manly's theory."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Language Review*, July, 1909, p. 483.

28.—On the difference in merit between A, B, and C, denoting four different authorships, Professor Manly protests (p. 44) that he never said that the “first part of A was the best in the whole work.” If I mistook his meaning, I am sorry. I may, however, recall that, after having written the words just mentioned, I quoted the very expressions used by him, at different places, in praise of the first part of A, and which had given me, and may have given others, the impression he objects to.<sup>1</sup> The fact has, however, no importance, as the discussion bore only on those specific qualities recognized by Professor Manly in A and which he fails to find in the supposed authors of B and C, concluding that they must be different people. I think I have shown that those differences were not at all what Professor Manly wanted us to believe, and, in particular, that what he told us of A’s “unity of structure and art of composition,” of the author never forgetting “for a moment the relation of any incident to his whole plan,” of his superiority in this respect to B, who is incapable of “consecutive thinking” and with whom “topics alien to the main theme intrude because of the use of a suggestive word,” is entirely unacceptable. I have given, I consider, glaring examples of A’s aptitude for vagaries; my judgment on this propensity of his being, if anything, too indulgent. Let anyone read the original passage which I summed up in my first example, and say whether the explanation, by Lady Holy Church, of the field full of folk is at all satisfactory and answers, in any way, our ideas of sound texture. I showed, I believe, that what the lady had to explain was not hard to make clear, and would have been made so but for A’s disposition to wander. Professor Manly takes exception to my having quoted the MS of the Valenciennes Passion (p. 45). I quoted it because it is the best known and oftenest reproduced. I shall not go into a discussion of the similar arrangement of the mansions of a mediæval stage in England and in France, and shall simply recall that the scene to be described was plain and familiar enough: if we have no English MS showing such a mystery-play in action, pictures of the same scenes, with God’s tower and the devil’s “dungun,” were to be seen in a number of churches (Shakespeare could see one in his youth at Stratford, a certainly English town) and were familiar to the many.

<sup>1</sup>P. 39 of my article.

Professor Manly asserts, it is true, that my account of the passage is inadequate and unsatisfactory. I do not think that his is perfect, either. But take the original, and you cannot fail to find that A does exactly what B is accused by Professor Manly of doing—and accused in view of proving that the author must have been a different man: a “suggestive word” makes him treat of a “topic alien to the main theme.” The main theme was the two castles and the field full of folk, and the topic on which A insists most is drunkenness.

I had quoted, pp. 41 and 42, n. 1, several other examples of incoherence, instead of “structural excellence”, in A; Professor Manly mentions only this one and says nothing of the others, so it is perhaps needless to add that I might have quoted, and that anyone may find, as many more as may be wanted. We had been told of differences between A and B, and we find similitudes.

29.—Wanting to show, from another point of view, more differences between A, B, and C, Professor Manly had said, after he had discussed the first vision: “Only once or twice does the author interrupt his narrative to express his own views and feelings.” I had thought, wrongly as it turns out, that the first part of A was meant, and I had pointed out five examples of such interruptions instead of “one or two.” But Professor Manly’s remark, of very moderate scope indeed, applied, I see (p. 46), only to the first half of the first half of A. It remains, however, that this device was resorted to in very appreciable fashion by the author of A—of the first part of A—and that the increase in the number of such cases in B and C is more apparent than real, since the bulk of the poem was considerably increased, too, in these versions: 7241 lines in B, against 2579 in A.

30.—Professor Manly cannot conceive that an author having written a fine line, or a fine passage, or a fine poem in his youth, may spoil it or leave it out in his later years. If such spoilings or discardings are discovered, then, he thinks, two different men must have been at work. He quotes two such examples from version C: one is the fine line in A and B, “Pereen with a *pater noster*” (which he deems to be only a translation of *Brevis oratio penetrat caelum*: it is luckily much more); the line is certainly spoiled in C, and spoiled to such an extent as to be meaningless, so that we may well doubt we have the real text, whether it be by Langland or by somebody else. The

other is the splendid appeal to God: "Ac pore peple thi prisoneres," which C omits altogether; Mr. Manly exclaims thereupon: "Would you not expect the man who had written those lines to preserve them? . . . Would you not really?" (p. 48).

The fact is that men are not the simple, logical and *once-for-all* individuals Mr. Manly fancies them to be, and the expectation he so fervidly expresses is doomed to be defeated, not by Langland alone, but by a number of poets and prosators of all times and countries, one man each of them, not four. Would you not expect the poet who had written the beautiful sonnet:

Je veux lire en trois jours l'Iliade d'Homère,

to preserve it? Yet Ronsard left it out of his works and never reproduced it in any edition of his writings, after 1560.

Would you not expect the man who had become famous by his *strambotti*, and had rendered poems of that kind fashionable, to preserve his? Yet Chariteo, whose reputation rested on such writings, having printed them in 1506, suppressed them in his works after 1509.

Would you not expect the man who had written the splendid sentences on music, on the stairway of the Vatican, on the Tiber and the Roman campagna, just published by the *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, to preserve them? Shakespeare did not, every day, write better. Yet Châteaubriand left them among discarded fragments of the *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, and they remained unprinted till now.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Christian Maréchal has pointed out, in his before-quoted work, a number of passages in which Lamartine replaced admirable lines to be found in the early versions of his *Jocelyn* by more commonplace ones, or discarded them altogether.<sup>2</sup> Yet again all those men were

<sup>1</sup> *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, two articles by A. Feugère, April and September, 1909, pp. 584, 585, 589. Here are two of those sentences: "Je vais saluer Léon XII après avoir traversé la magnifique place de Saint-Pierre; je monte avec une émotion toujours nouvelle le grand escalier désert du Vatican, foulé par tant de pas effacés et d'où descendirent tant de fois les destinées du monde."—"Je me perdais dans ces sentiments indécis que fait naître la musique, art qui tient le milieu entre la nature matérielle et la nature intellectuelle, qui peut dépouiller l'amour de son enveloppe terrestre ou donner un corps à l'âge du ciel. Selon les dispositions de celui qui les écoute, ces mélodies sont des pensées ou des caresses."

<sup>2</sup> *Jocelyn inédit*, 1909, pp. lvii, lxiii, xevi, xcvi, xcviif ff. Some of those fine lines, Mr. Maréchal writes, "Lamartine les a sacrifiés sans regret, mais nous ne saurions accepter d'un cœur aussi léger un pareil sacrifice," p. xcvi.

essentially artists (while Langland was not), that is, men who, if any, would have preserved the artistic products of their pen. Time and again they did not: much more could Langland act likewise, without Professor Manly being justified in cutting him into pieces.

Add thereto, that when we come to think of the hypothesis Professor Manly wants us to accept, of a new author freely remodeling another's work, of a new author who is a "sincere man," who is a man of "notable intellectual power" (and no less can be said of the poet who wrote the touching melancholy addition at the beginning of *passus vi* in C, the picturesque and realistic portraits of the lollers and sham hermits, etc.), we are free to think that those spoilings or discardings are scarcely less surprising on the part of such a supposed reviser than on the part of the author, and we might say, in our turn: Would you not expect such a reviser, finding those lines, to preserve them? . . . Would you not really?

31.—I continue unable to agree with Professor Manly on the question of the pardon granted to Piers, the only sort of pardon to fit such a being, one with the grandest and noblest import, not one certainly to be torn to pieces by that high-souled leader. The tearing to pieces is suppressed in C, to the immense advantage of the scene and dismay of Professor Manly, whose system does not apparently allow him to permit the author of C to act so well. He considers, therefore (p. 48), that it is quite natural for Piers, in B, and also in A, to destroy, out of spite, or, as Mr. Manly prefers to say, "out of grief and disappointment," the scroll giving him and his followers their rule of life—out of grief and disappointment, because he is shown by a priest of the vulgar-minded sort, by a "lewede lorel,"<sup>1</sup> that his bill contains the noblest precept, and is not one of those pardons which despicable pardoners "gaf for pans." Piers to be "disappointed" at that!

In A and B the passage is absolutely unintelligible and inconsistent, to the point of being a serious blemish in those versions. C immensely improved it, and in more ways than one: in the A version the pardon was twice said to have been procured from the pope, which did not fit with what followed; B suppressed one of the irrelevant allusions to the pope, and C suppressed both.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A, VIII, 123.

<sup>2</sup> A, VIII, 8, 21; B, VII, 8, 19; C, X, 8, 23.

To further diminish C's merit, Professor Manly accuses the poet of having badly joined together what he left after he had suppressed the unacceptable tearing of the scroll and suppressed also the rambling speech delivered thereupon by Piers in A (for rambling speeches, sad to say, are to be found in A, too). Well may the fault be contested,<sup>1</sup> but it is of small consequence. Supposing the case to be as we are told, Langland's more or less clever joining together of the two rims of the gap left by his removal of the obnoxious passage is of very little import: of such sins he was certainly capable. The removal of the lines is, on the contrary, of great import, as it leaves to Piers his true character, and makes of the whole scene one of the grandest in the poem.

32.—Professor Manly would “also like to know the meaning of B, VII, 168 (C, X, 318) . . . B and C apparently thought ‘preost’ was the subject of ‘divinede,’ whereas the subject is, of course, ‘I,’ implied in ‘me’ of l. 152” (p. 49).

The truth is that the passage is not clear, logical or grammatical in either of the three texts, and we all wish it were the only one of that sort in Langland. The author of C, whether Langland, as I believe, or a reviser, as Mr. Manly thinks, cannot certainly have meant that, according to the priest, “Dowel indulgences passede,” since this was bound to be Piers's and not the priest's opinion; and the poet was as fully aware of it when writing C as when composing A and B, since, a few lines before, he had recalled, in this last version, the opposition of views between the two men, and how “the preest inpugned” the “pardon Peers hadde” (C, X, 300), and since, moreover, C is the only text where the episode is given its full value.

Though I know how unwilling Professor Manly is to admit that the original copyist may have been so inordinately clumsy as to mistake two or three letters, I am tempted to suggest that very possibly, while the copies we have of C read: “And how the preest prevede,” the

<sup>1</sup> All the reasoning is founded on the line,

The preest thus and Perkyn' of the pardon jangled (C, X, 292).

“which is nonsense,” says Mr. Manly, “after the suppression of the jangling” (p. 48). But the opposition between the views of the priest and those Piers must have entertained, may have been thought by the author to be sufficiently indicated by the priest's remark “Ich can no pardon fynde,” and to justify the allusion to the jangling. Very possibly, however, the original text did not read *thus*, but *tho* (then), which gave the line a clear and unimpeachable meaning.

original read: "And how that peers prevede" (C, X, 318). If this is considered too bold, I would answer that it is not more so than to suppose, as Professor Manly does, that in A (whose logic must be saved at all costs, though it cannot be saved after the tearing of the "pardon" by Piers), "I" is "of course" implied by "me" of l. 152. The whole passage in A is as follows—and, as Langland would have said, let anyone who can "construe this on Englisch":

Al this maketh me· on metels to thenken  
 Mony tyme at midniht· whon men schulde slepe,  
 On Pers the plouh-mon· and which a pardoun he hedde,  
 And hou the preost inpugnede hit· al bi pure resoun,  
 And divinede that Dowel· indulgence passede.

—A, VIII, 152.

33.—To Professor Manly's "great surprise" (p. 49), I refused to find any failure of C to understand B, when the former modified the passage about the belling of the cat.

At the risk of still increasing Professor Manly's surprise, I emphatically persist in my way of thinking, and deem that C deserves praise, not blame. I persist in considering that in B, the passage was unsatisfactory: in which passage the well-spoken rat describes certain "segges" or beings—by which he means dogs, I fully agree in this with Mr. Manly, everybody does, and the point is not under discussion—who are to be seen in "the cite of London," who bear about their necks bright collars of crafty work, and who go "uncoupled" in "wareine and in waste." If they bore a bell on their collars,

Men myzte wite where thei went· and awei renne.

—B, ProL., 166.

This is certainly a clumsy speech. The "segges" being dogs in B, and obviously sporting dogs, whom their masters uncouple to use them in warrens, how can we imagine that, if they had a bell on their necks, men would know where they go, and "away run!" In this part of his speech, B's rat seems to me, I confess, a very silly rat.

C's changes are quite sensible and to his credit. Far from showing a "failure to understand" the earlier version and helping us to believe in a quadruple authorship, they lead the other way. The author deliberately drops all the allusions to dogs, as they fitted

imperfectly his purpose; he suppresses the mention of the uncoupling, the warren, etc., and replaces the whole by a very clear and pointed allusion to actual men and to actual customs prevailing then in England. "But this is a beast fable," Professor Manly exclaims; "what have men to do in it, among the rats and mice? . . . And above all, why the warrens and the waste? Do men run uncoupled in rabbit warrens and waste fields?" But C does not say that they do, and is grievously misrepresented here by Professor Manly. As evidenced, on the other hand, by numberless examples, from the days of Æsop to those of Langland, in a "beast fable," men are not necessarily ignored; a rat is not bound to allude only to animals, and may just as well, like the swallow in Æsop's fine fable of the Swallow and Birds, allude to men, especially if the meaning is to be made clearer thereby. And such is the case here, C's rearrangement being as follows:

Ich have yseie grete syres· in citees and in tounes  
 Bere byȝes of bryȝt gold· al aboute hure neckes,  
 And colers of crafty werke· bothe knyȝtes and squiers.  
 Were ther a belle on hure byȝe· by Jesus, as me thynketh,  
 Men myȝte wite wher thei wenten· and hure way roume.  
 Ryȝt so (etc.) —C, ProL., 177.

34.—Passing to the personal notes to be found in the Visions and which, I consider, point to a unity of authorship, Professor Manly, in order to minimize their importance, declares that they are, "in reality, singularly few" (p. 54). They are, in reality, singularly numerous: we must remember the period when *Piers Plowman* was written, and I should like to know what are the poems in comparison with which the personal notes in the Visions can be described as being, in reality, singularly few.

As to localities, Professor Manly says that "the Malvern hills are no doubt a locality with which A1 had special associations of some sort, but they have apparently no special significance for the other writers" (p. 53). It should be observed, in this respect, that C not only preserved all those allusions supposed to be for him without special significance, but increased their number by one. After the added passage at the beginning of passus vi, where the author considers his past life, thinks of his childhood, of his father, of his friends



of former days, the name of Malvern recurs to his mind and he tells us that he now resumes the dreams he had dreamed on those same hills:

Thenne mette me moche more than ich by-fore tolde  
Of the mater that ich mette fyrst on Malverne hulle.

—C, VI, 109.

The counterpart of the first of these lines but not of the second is to be found in versions A and B.

35.—As to the author's sayings about himself, his youth, his disappointments, his way of living, Professor Manly persists in fancying that all this must be fancy: but that is, on his part, mere guessing. I have recalled how certain recent discoveries show that some prudence should be used in forming hypotheses of this sort, and that poets were, in such cases, guided by their memory and not by their imagination oftener than latter-day critics would have us to believe. To the examples I have given, more than one might be added, selected from various times and countries, for men will resemble men, poets will resemble poets.<sup>1</sup>

36.—Professor Manly insists that, given their names, Kitte and Kalote must have been dissolute women (p. 55) in spite of my having pointed out that this interpretation of the words would be as untenable in the case of a reviser as in that of the original author, since the passage, very beautiful in itself, would thus become absurd if not repugnant. He answers nothing to what I have said and shown, that before such names become definitively opprobrious, there is a long period when they are used both ways.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Manly, who comes forth with a theory of his own, rejecting the usual ideas on the subject and replacing them by an interpretation which causes the passage to be, in spite of what he alleges, meaningless, has done nothing to show that, for those names, such a period was past, and that the meaning cannot but have been shameful.

37.—I never desired to hold Professor Manly "responsible for every phrase of Professor Jack's article" (p. 56). I simply quoted Mr. Manly himself, according to whom Mr. Jack had "conclusively proved"

<sup>1</sup> This example, for instance. Studying Lamartine's famous novel of *Raphael*, Mr. Léon Séché writes thus: "Chose remarquable et que les incrédules d'hier sont bien forcés de reconnaître aujourd'hui, Lamartine n'a rien inventé dans ce roman ou pas grand chose. C'est tout au plus si, par endroits, il a interverti l'ordre chronologique des faits et les quelques inexactitudes qu'on y relève sont plutôt attribuables à l'infidélité de sa mémoire."—*Revue Hebdomadaire*, Oct. 3, 1908, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> "Péronnelle" is another example of a feminine name remaining, for a long time, an honorable one, and then coming, by degrees, to be used disparagingly.

that the "supposed autobiographical details" in the poem were merely part of the fiction. I showed that the latter had "conclusively proved" nothing of the kind, and given what he had to concede in the end, he could not himself pretend that he had. I continue to believe that, so long as no positive text or fact contradicts the plain statements in the poem (and no such has been adduced), we are entitled to take them for what they are given.

### III

At certain places in his article, Professor Manly pays me some compliments which I should be most happy to merit, and some others which, I hope, I do not deserve. He attributes to me an "eloquence" and "dexterity" which, since he, for his part, repudiates all such, I hope I am not afflicted with: the success he looks forward to, he tells us, for his own argumentation is "not a success of dialectical dexterity, but of sound reasoning" (pp. 1, 2).

I hope some sound reasoning may be found in my article, too.

At the end of his reply, Professor Manly begs his reader not to forget that, on my road, "many of the bridges which are fairest in outward seeming are really unsafe structures with a crumbling keystone; that pitfalls lie concealed beneath some of the most attractive stretches . . ." etc., and that, if he allows himself to be carried away by my eloquence, he will have "to turn back and seek painfully the plain highway," regretting to have abandoned it "for the soft but dangerous by-paths" to which I had lured him.

I had no idea that I had thus played the part of a land siren, attracting unwary travelers to dangerous regions. I thought, in fact, that I had done nothing, from the first, but defend old, plain, commonly accepted ideas, and follow the trodden way and most people's road, having chosen the most inglorious and unfashionable task. I did so, not out of abnegation, but simply because those ideas, in my judgment, were the sounder, and had been attacked without just motives. And I beg, in my turn, the reader to be assured that it was not in "soft but dangerous by-paths" that I found cause for the belief in which I persist, that "William Langland made Pers Ploughman."

J. J. JUSSERAND

SAINT HAON-LE-CHÂTEL  
August, 1909

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## THE AUTHORSHIP OF 'PIERS PLOWMAN.'

THE controversy as to the authorship of the different versions of *Piers Plowman* was opened by Prof. Manly in a short but most important article (*Modern Philology*, Jan. 1906). Prof. Manly stated his conviction 'that the three versions were not the work of one and the same man, but each the work of a separate and distinct author.' Whilst reserving the full proof of these and of his other theses, he drew attention to certain incoherencies in the A-text. These, he argued, were due, not to carelessness on the part of the author, but to the loss of two leaves from the original MS., now lost, from which all extant MSS. of the A-text are derived. It followed that the B-reviser, who accepted this incoherent arrangement, and even added some lines with the object of making it more intelligible, could hardly be identical with the poet of the original A-version.

Three months later, Dr Henry Bradley in a letter to the *Athenæum*<sup>1</sup> accepted the view that these incoherencies of the A-text were due, not to the poet himself, but to a transcriber. He suggested however that the source of the derangement was to be sought 'not in a MS. written on parchment arranged in quires or gatherings, but in the "copy" (to use the word in the modern printer's sense) handed by the author to the first transcriber. This would no doubt be written on loose leaves of paper.' This modification allowed of a conjectural arrangement of the original text different from that of Prof. Manly, but of course left untouched his argument drawn from 'B's acceptance of the present defective text.'

Some two years later, in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Prof. Manly stated more at length, though still all too briefly, his views as to the independent authorship of the A- B- and C-texts. This article was subsequently issued as a separate pamphlet to members of the Early

<sup>1</sup> April 21, 1906.

English Text Society. The case against unity of authorship has thus been widely circulated in England: and there has been a tendency to accept views put forward with so much conviction and with the support of such high authorities. Prof. Manly's arguments have since been examined by M. Jusserand in *Modern Philology*, and Prof. Manly has replied to these criticisms. It is to be wished that M. Jusserand's defence of William Langland could be reprinted and circulated in England, since, for one English student who has access to the American periodical in which it is to be found, twenty read, in the *Cambridge History*, the case against the traditional view.

M. Jusserand however labours under the difficulty that he accepts the theory of the lost or misplaced leaf, whilst denying the consequence drawn from it by Prof. Manly. He is thus in a disadvantageous position. For, if we once accept the view that passages have been misplaced or lost, Prof. Manly's deductions seem to follow naturally. It is not merely that B accepted what, in that case, we must admit to be a defective text of A. This he might conceivably have done had he been A. But B also attempted to remedy the defect. Hence the parallel instances which have been quoted, of authors who, in revising their work, have failed to notice blemishes, are hardly to the point. B *did* notice an incoherency, and he remedied it, but in a way which shows that no suspicion that a leaf had been lost or shifted ever crossed his mind.

The defects found in the present A-text, and accepted by the B-reviser, are three.

(1) The confession of Robert the Robber comes at the end of the seven deadly sins, following Sloth, although, according to the mediæval classification, Robbery is a branch of Covetousness. (Dr Bradley.)

(2) The concluding lines of the confession of Sloth are, it is claimed, more appropriate to Covetousness, and should really be placed under that sin. (Dr Bradley's modification of Prof. Manly's view.)

(3) Certain lines mentioning Piers' wife and children seem incoherent, and have, it is claimed, been misplaced. (Prof. Manly.)

That there is something crude in these passages as they stand in both the A- and the B-text may be admitted. But that this incoherency is so gross that it must be due, not to A himself, but to a scrivener, is a statement which needs some examination.

## I. ROBERT THE ROBBER.

In any systematic treatise on the Sins, the proper place for an act of theft is indisputably under Covetousness, from which it springs. But does it therefore follow that the placing of Robert the Robber under Sloth, as found in all MSS. of the A-text, is so impossible that it cannot have been the intention of the original writer?

Robert's name shows that he represents a class, the 'Robert's Men,' professional vagabonds and thieves. This was pointed out by Skeat in his notes<sup>1</sup>, but its importance, as bearing upon the *shifted leaf* controversy has, so far as I know, been overlooked.

Besides this passage in the Confession of Sloth, there are three important references in the A-text to these 'Robert's Men' or 'Wastours'—for that the two names are synonymous is clear from a Statute of Edward III, in which they are mentioned together<sup>2</sup>.

In A Pro. 43 it is said of 'bidders and beggars'<sup>3</sup>

In glotonye, god wot, go þei to bedde,  
And risen vp wiþ ribaudrie, as<sup>4</sup> Robertis knaues;  
Slep *and* sleuþe sewiþ hem euere.

Here, then, at the outset of the poem, we have Ribaldry, Gluttony and Sloth (not Covetousness) mentioned as the besetting sins of 'Robert's Men.'

In A VII, 140—172 we have a full length portrait of Wastour:

Þanne gan Wastour<sup>5</sup> arise *and* wolde haue yfouȝte,  
To Peris þe Plouȝman he *profride* his gloue...  
Wilt þou, nilt þou, we wile haue oure wil of þi<sup>6</sup> flour,

<sup>1</sup> Clarendon Press Edit. 1886, ii, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Item come en lestatut fait a Wyncestre, en temps meisme le Roi lael, soit contenuz, que si nul estraunge passe par pais de nuyt, de qi homme eit suspencion, soit meintenanz arestu & liuere au visconte, & demoerge en gard tant qil soit dument deliueres; et diuerses roberies, homicides, & felonies, ont este faitz einz ces heures par gentz qi sont appelez Roberdesmen, Wastours & Draghlaçche; si est accorde et establi que si homme eit suspencion de mal de nuis tielx, soit il de jour, soit il de nuyt, que meintenanz soient arestuz par les conestables des villes; et sils soient arestuz en franchises, soient liuere as baillifs des franchises (Statutes of the Realm, 1810, i, 268, 5<sup>o</sup> Edwardi III, Cap. XIV).

<sup>3</sup> The quotations are given from T, the MS. in Trinity College, Cambridge (R. 3. 14), which on the whole seems to be the best A-text extant. The most obvious blunders of this MS. are corrected from a collation of the twelve other A-MSS. Such corrections are marked, and further details given in the footnotes. Variants in other cases are not recorded, nor is the usage of the MS. followed with regard to capitals and small letters. The MSS. collated are R (Rawlinson 137), U (Univ. Coll., Oxford), E (Trin. Coll., Dub.), I (Ingilby), H<sub>2</sub> (Harl. 6041), D (Douce 323), Dg (Digby 145), W (Westminster), L (Lincoln's Inn), As (Ashmole 1468), V (Vernon), H (Harl. 875).

For many collations of and references to MSS., used throughout this article, I am indebted to Mr J. H. G. Grattan.

<sup>4</sup> tho, þesc, etc. H<sub>2</sub>LVH.

<sup>5</sup> þe wastour T; þe wastores R; a wastour I; H<sub>2</sub> is wanting here. The other MSS. omit the article.

<sup>6</sup> þi, þy RUEIAsVHDgWL; þis TH<sub>2</sub>D.

And þi flessch fecche away whanne vs likeþ,  
 And make vs merye þer wiþ maugre þi chekis.  
 Þanne Peris þe Plouzman pleyneþ hym to þe kniþt,  
 To kepen hym as conenaunt was fro curside shrewis,  
 Fro wastours þat waite wynneres to shende.  
 Curteisliche þe kniþt þanne, as his kynde wolde,  
 Warnide<sup>1</sup> Wastour and wisside hym betere:  
 'Or þou shalt abigge be þe lawe be þe ordre þat I bere.'  
 'I was not woid to werche,' quath Wastour, 'now wile I not begynne.'  
 And let list of þe lawe, and lesse of þe kniþt,  
 And countide Peris at a pese and his plouþ boþe,  
 And manacide hym and his men, whanne þey<sup>2</sup> next metten.

Now when Wastour proposed to raid Piers Plowman's barn he was giving way, a theologian would have said, to the sin of coveting other men's goods. Yet, taking the picture as a whole, Wastour would not be inappropriately placed under Sloth, and indeed it is as an example of idleness that the poet introduces him.

In VII, 66 Robyn or Robert 'the ribaudour' is mentioned with other typical scamps.

To our author<sup>3</sup> then, a *Robert's man* or a *Wastour* would seem to convey the notion of vagabondage, leading to ribaldry, gluttony and theft.

Would the confession of a Robert—for it must be noted that in this passage Robert is used almost as a common-noun<sup>4</sup>—who has not even been an industrious robber, seeing he has amassed nothing, be an unfit sequel to the Confession of Sloth?

And, turning to Robert's own confession, does it bear marks of having been written to illustrate Robert as having given way to the sin of Covetousness, or of Sloth?

It would have been easy to make a confession for Robbery which would show how Robbery springs from Covetousness. 'The author of the B-text' has done so when he makes his Avarice confess to having risen by night and robbed his companions' baggage. But Robert's confession shows nothing of this. It is not quite the case, as Dr Bradley says, that he 'bewails his crimes, and vows from henceforth to lead an honest life'.<sup>5</sup> He says nothing about his crimes, beyond an admission that he has done ill: nor does he promise to lead an honest life. On

<sup>1</sup> þe inserted after warnide in TDgW; H<sub>2</sub> wanting here.

<sup>2</sup> þey] he T, all other MSS. þey, þai *d'c.*; H<sub>2</sub> wanting here.

<sup>3</sup> I have intentionally omitted B's reference to Robert Renne-aboute (B. vi 150) who is mentioned as a typical idler, much as Robert the Ribaudour is in the earlier passage in A.

<sup>4</sup> We should read 'So rewe on this Robert' not 'So rewe on me, Robert' which is a corruption of the VII family of MSS. (found also in Dg.).

<sup>5</sup> *Athenaeum*, April 21, 1906.

the contrary, he points out the difficulties which will beset him should he attempt to do so, and pleads guilty to thriftlessness and ignorance of any craft. He has nothing with which to make restitution; he

on reddite lokide,  
Ac for þere was noujt where-with he wepte swiþe sore.

He is at his wits' end, for he knows no trade which will enable him to earn an honest living:

So rewe on þis Robert, þat red non ne hauip,  
Ne neuere wenip to wynne wiþ craft þat he knowip.  
(A, v, 251-2.)

Dr Bradley explains this 'as he knows no trade he cannot hope ever to earn the means of restoring what he has stolen<sup>1</sup>.' But Robert's plight is even worse than this. He has no rede, and never weens, by any trade that he knows, to win, i.e., to work for his living<sup>2</sup>. And this is a confession more likely to have been written for a 'Robert' if he were intended to come under Sloth, than if he were intended to come under Avarice.

We may imagine our Robert as an idle apprentice, who from idleness has fallen into Wanhope; he has become an avowed outcast from society, a *felon*, as A calls him. Robert consoles himself by calling to memory the case of the penitent thief. Now Skeat pointed out long ago that the right place for the penitent thief is under Sloth, under the sub-heading Wanhope, which always belongs to Accidie.

We have, then, in the received A-text:

- (1) l. 222. Introduction of Sleuthe.
- (2) l. 225. 'War the for Wanhope.'
- (3) ll. 242—259 the case of Robert the Robber, a *felon*, who, though he has no reed, and never hopes to earn an honest livelihood, yet
- (4) ll. 246—248 comforts himself by the example of the Penitent Thief.

Exactly so, in Chaucer's Parson's Tale:

- (1) Under the main heading Accidie, we have
- (2) Wanhope.
- (3) 'This horrible sinne is so perilous, that he that is despeired ther nis no *felonye* ne no sinne that he douteth for to do; as shewed wel by Iudas.'
- (4) Yet the example of the Penitent Thief is given, to show that men should never despair.

<sup>1</sup> *The Nation* (New York), April 29, 1909, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> For *win* see note on p. 6.

If the Parson's Tale places the thief and traitor Judas under Sloth-Wanhope rather than under Covetousness, there is surely no reason why Robert the Robber should not go under that head also. And the fact that elsewhere the poet associates Robert's men with Sloth, not with Covetousness, and that he makes Robert confess to being unemployable, rather than grasping, is strong indication that he intended him to go where all the MSS. put him.

True, Robert's lapses into highway robbery, or house-breaking, must have called for great, if intermittent, exertions. But this does not deprive him of his claim to a place under Sloth or Accidie, which is a neglect of God's grace and of honest industry. *Sinful* exertion rather qualifies than disqualifies. Wyclif<sup>1</sup> emphasises this: if a man is not doing good, he will be doing evil, 'for sunwhat mot a man do.' So in the *Ancren Riwle*<sup>2</sup> it is made clear that Sloth does not exclude evil works, but that, on the contrary, the idle are the more prompt to do the Devil's bidding.

There would seem then to be no ground for disturbing the order of the MSS., in so far as Robert the Robber is concerned.

## II. SLOTH'S WICKED WINNINGS.

A more serious difficulty remains, if we are to defend the order of the MSS. of A. Sloth, in his vow, after promising for the future to be regular in his religious exercises, continues:

And ȝet wile I ȝelde aȝen, ȝif I so muchel haue,  
 Al þat I wykkidly wan siþen I wyt hadde.  
 And<sup>3</sup> þeiȝ my liflode lakke, leten I nille  
 Þat iche<sup>4</sup> man shal haue his er I hennis wende;  
 And wiþ þe residue *and* þe remenaunt, be þe roode of Chestre,  
 I wile seke Treuþe er I se<sup>5</sup> Rome.

'Wicked winnings' seem inappropriate to Sloth. But does 'win' in the language of *Piers Plowman* necessarily convey any idea of great gain? It may mean simply working for one's daily bread<sup>6</sup>, indeed, to *labour* is the primary meaning of 'win' (cf. O.E. *winnan* to work, toil).

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Arnold III, 142.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Morton, 212, 213.

<sup>3</sup> And *om.* TH<sub>2</sub>DA<sub>s</sub>.

<sup>4</sup> iche a man T.

<sup>5</sup> seke TH<sub>2</sub>: W *corrupt*: other MSS. se, see.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., A I, 153

For þauȝ ȝe be trewe of ȝoure tunge *and* teweliche wynne,

And ek as chast as a child þat in chirche wepiþ. [TRH<sub>2</sub>D have For þi be (bcþ).]

B VI, 322 Ac I warne ȝow, werkemen, wynneth while ȝe mowe.

In C I 222 hand labourers are called 'wynners with handen As taylours and tanners.' Prof. Skeat, to whom I am indebted for a most interesting letter on the subject says 'surely, to win is to *earn* simply: and *winner* is *worker*. If not, there's no point in the title of the poem *Winner and Waster*.'



Now Accidie being the neglect of honest industry, it follows that the slothful, above every man, wins wickedly. He and the covetous man are the only 'wicked winners' among the followers of the seven sins; but the slothful the most of the two. For the covetous man<sup>1</sup> may earn an honest living; his wicked winnings are the excess of his gains over what is justly his due. But a man, in so far as he is idle, cannot 'truly win' at all. He must live either by begging, or by receiving wages for services never rendered, like the 'dikers and delvers that do their deeds ill,' or by negligently withholding what is due to others. In each case he 'wins wickedly.'

The opening of Sloth's confession, with its promise of regular attendance at religious services, is strictly according to precedent: for the remedy against Sloth begins nearly always with a regular attendance at shrift and mass. But something further is, almost invariably, enjoined in all treatises: variously called *dedbote*<sup>2</sup>, *satisfaction*<sup>2</sup>, *besinesse*, *magnanimity*, *magnificence*. Could there be a better form of *satisfaction* or *besinesse* than for Sloth to make amends to all whom he has wronged through his slackness? This, at least, is how B understood the passage, and he has made the sense clearer by inserting lines above (B v, 429—435) showing how Sloth had failed to pay for that which he had borrowed.

Now it is argued that this is so far-fetched and muddle-headed an explanation that it is incredible that B, who certainly understood the passage so, can be identical with A, whose treatment shows 'firmness and mastery of structure.' I submit that it is by no means an impossible interpretation.

Perhaps technically it is wrong to place the withholding of wages and of things borrowed under Sloth rather than Avarice. But the distinction is one which it is difficult to draw, and where it is exceedingly easy to go wrong. In the *Ancren Riwele*<sup>3</sup>, whilst the withholding of wages is equated with robbery and placed under Avarice, carelessness with regard to pledges is put under Sloth. Surely the intention must count. Deliberate appropriation of others' goods would proceed from Covetousness: unintentional misappropriation from Sloth.

<sup>1</sup> Unless he spend his time in practising *usury*, in which case he is as much a burden to the commonweal as the slothful man. For usury is 'unkind,' unnatural and unproductive. Cf *Piers Plowman* B v, 276, Dante, *Inf.* xi, 94—111.

<sup>2</sup> These, of course, need mean no more than penance or perhaps even penitence.

<sup>3</sup> Þe þet ne warneð oðer of his vuel oðer of his lure nis hit slouh ʒemeleste oðer attri onde? Misiteoðeget, etholden cwide, oðer fundles, oðer lone, nis hit ʒiscunge oðer þeote? Etholden oðres hure ouer his rihte terme nis hit strong rellae? Þet is under ʒiscunge. Oðer ʒif me ʒemeð wurse ei þing ileaned oðer biteih to witene þen he wene þet hit ouh, nis hit tricherie oðer ʒemeleaste of slouhðe? Ed. Morton, 1853, p. 208.

But, after all, the author of the A-text must be judged by his own usage, not by that of the *Ancren Riwele*. Can we find any passage in which A associates any definite act with 'wicked winning' or its antithesis 'true winning'?

Piers Plowman in making his will (A VII, 89—94) says:

My wyf shal haue of þat I wan wiþ treuþe *and* namore,  
 And dele among my frendis *and* my dere children.  
 For þeiȝ I deȝe to day my dettis ben quyt,  
 I bar hom þat I borewīde er I to bedde ȝede.  
 And wiþ þe residue *and* þe remenaunt, be þe rode of Chestre,  
 I wile worsshipe þere wiþ Treuþe in my lyue.

Here is a passage which, from the way in which it re-echoes the same phrases, seems to have been written with deliberate reference to the 'Sloth' passage under consideration, and in it our author associates prompt repayment with 'true winning.' Yet it is asserted to be incredible that by 'wicked winning' he can have meant slackness in repayment of debt.

It may be objected that, though this would be an adequate explanation if we were dealing with the text of the B-reviser, who often misses out a stage in his argument, and is guilty of incoherency and want of discrimination, such incoherency would have been quite impossible with 'so careful an artist as A, who in no single instance assigns to any character either words or actions not clearly and strictly appropriate.'

But, on the showing of his treatment of the other Deadly Sins, was A the 'careful artist' which the advocates of multiple authorship make him? Here is the complete confession of one of the Sins:

...seide allas, *and* on<sup>1</sup> oure lady criede  
 To make mercy for his mysdede betwyn god *and* hym;  
 Wiþ þat he shulde<sup>2</sup> þe satirday seue ȝer þer aftir  
 Drinke but wiþ þe doke *and* dȝne but ones.

Ask any person, unfamiliar with the text, what sin this represents, and he will assuredly say 'Gluttony.' But our 'careful artist, who in no single instance assigns to any character either words or actions not clearly and strictly appropriate,' meant it to represent Lust. It is easy to gloss the text by explaining that the eating of two or more dinners *per diem*, which Lecchour abjures, tends towards Lust (though I should rather have thought it tended towards indigestion) whilst abstinence leads to continence. But I understand the claim for A to be that he is so coherent that he needs no gloss, and therefore cannot be B, who

<sup>1</sup> on RUEDDgWLI, to TH<sub>2</sub>V, H *corrupt*.

<sup>2</sup> shulde *misplaced* in TH<sub>2</sub>.

often does. Once admit A capable of incoherency, and there is no longer any necessity to assume that the incoherency of his Sloth must of necessity be due to a shifted or missing leaf.

And A's other 'Sins' are almost equally incoherent. A's Pride shows signs of Envy, and perhaps of other sins. A's Envy shows as many traits of Wrath as of Envy. No one reading A's Gluttony could tell whether it was the confession of Gluttony or of Accidie. It begins with neglect of shrift and ends with sleeping all Sunday. And note that, whilst it is Gluttony who is kept away from Church by lingering over his ale, it is Sloth who vows never to do so again. Here also it may be urged that the Glutton and the Slothful man are hardly distinguishable, and that therefore it does not much matter if what strictly belongs to the one is mentioned under the heading of the other: but equally, I think, were the robber and the sturdy beggar indistinguishable on the ill-policed roads of the fourteenth century. If A is capable of confusing the one pair, he might well have confused the other.

But indeed the incoherencies of A have been so ably pointed out by M. Jusserand that it is waste of time to urge the matter further. It need only be added here that the scribes themselves were puzzled by A's want of clearness. One scribe, most excusably, glosses *Envy* as *Wrath*: another, feeling the inadequacy of the confession of Lust, adds the following lines, so as to make the sin agree with the name:

And chastite to seke as a chyld elene,  
The lust of his likam to leten for euere,  
And fle fro felyschipe there foly may arise,  
For that makith many man mysdo ful ofte.

These lines cannot possibly be genuine: they are found only in one inferior MS., of one class: but their addition serves to show that there were readers in the fifteenth century who felt the inadequacy of A's description of the Sins.

Can it then be regarded as proved that (1) A's Sloth is anything worse than incoherent or that (2) A was incapable of incoherency?

### III. PIERS' WIFE AND CHILDREN.

The last instance where the B reviser is stated to have passed over a palpable dislocation of A's text is in the speech of Piers in Passus VII.

And who so helpiþ me to eren or any þing swynke  
Shal haue, be oure lord, þe more here in heruist,  
And make hym mery wiþ þe corn, who so it begruceliþ.

And alle kyne crafty men þat come lyue in treuþe  
 I shal fynde hem foode þat feiþfulliche libbeþ ;  
 Sauē Iakke þe Iugelour, and Ionete of þe stewis,  
 And Robyn þe ribaudour for hise rusty woordis.  
 Treuþe tolde me ones and bad me telle it forþ  
*Delectantur de libro* I shulde<sup>1</sup> not dele wiþ hem ;  
 For holy chirche is holden of hem no tiþes to asken  
*Et cum iustis non scribantur.*  
 Dei be<sup>2</sup> askapid good auntir, now god hem amende.  
 Dame Werche whanne tyme is Piers wyf hatte,  
 His douȝter hattip Do riȝt so<sup>3</sup> or þi damme shal þe bete,  
 His sone hattip Suffre þi souereynes to haue here wille  
 And deme hem nouȝt for ȝif þou dost þou shalt it dere abiggen.  
 Let god worþe wiþ al for so his woord techip.  
 For now<sup>4</sup> I am old and hor and hane of myn owene  
 To penaunce and to pilgrinage wile I passe with opere.  
 For þi I wile er I wende do wryte<sup>5</sup> my bequest.

Accordingly the Testament follows, with mention (VII, 89, 90) of Piers' wife and children.

Professor Manly regards the five lines beginning 'Dame Werche whanne tyme is' as having been placed by an error in their present position: and the view that the text has been deranged has been accepted by Dr Furnivall and M. Jusserand. Professor Manly argues 'The names of the wife and children of Piers, originally written in the margin opposite ll. 89—90 by some scribe, have been absurdly introduced into the text, to the interruption and confusion of the remarks of Piers in regard to his preparations for his journey.'

But these names do *not* interrupt Piers' remarks about preparations for his journey. Piers' last allusion to his journey was in l. 59, twelve lines before the mention of his wife and children. The lines immediately preceding the names are an admonition to work. And this admonition is then emphasised and summarised in the names of Piers' family 'Dame-Work-when-time-is' and 'Do-right-so-or-thy-dame-shall-thee-beat.' There is nothing wrong with the text here; for this introduction of remarks about persons and things, which seem quite irrelevant, until we scrutinize their *names*, is a favourite trick of our author's. We may regard it as an ungainly trick; but that is not the point, for we can easily parallel it in the A-text. In Passus IV Reason has been admonishing the King that no wrong should go unpunished:

For *nullum malum* the mon mette<sup>6</sup> with *Inpunitum*  
 And bad *nullum bonum* be<sup>7</sup> *irremuneratum*. (IV, 126-7.)

<sup>1</sup> ne shulde T. H<sub>2</sub>As *wanting for all this passage, E for part.*

<sup>2</sup> am T, other MSS. be, ben, bep.

<sup>3</sup> so omitted TDE, found in all other MSS.

<sup>4</sup> now omitted TD, found in all other MSS.

<sup>5</sup> wye T: W corrupt: other MSS. write.

<sup>6</sup> the mon mette] he may mete TH<sub>2</sub>D.

<sup>7</sup> bonum be] malum T.

What have *Nullum Malum*, his meeting with *Inpunitum* and his remarks to *Nullum Bonum* to do with Reason's sermon? Nothing; but putting together the names of these characters we have a sentence which has every bearing upon Reason's foregoing words. Similarly, *Piers' wife* has nothing to do with his preceding remarks: but the *name of Piers' wife* has everything.

#### IV. THE REARRANGED TEXT COMPARED WITH THE TEXT GIVEN IN THE MSS.

Hitherto I have tried to show that, in the passages where the text is supposed to have been proved to be deranged, the order given in the MSS. is not impossible: and that therefore the evidence for the shifted leaf is not of that overwhelmingly strong character which is necessary, if it is to carry the weight of the argument which has been built upon it.

It should be enough if the MS. order has been shown to be possible: it is unreasonable to call upon an author, under pain of being divided into five, to prove that his arrangement of his matter cannot be improved. Yet I think that it can further be shown that the MS. order actually offers fewer objections than do the proposed rearrangements.

First with regard to the lines as to Piers' wife and children. Piers' family, in virtue of their names, are linked to the admonitions preceding: and the mention of wife and family brings us naturally to the Testament. These lines then conclude the admonition and introduce the will, linking the one to the other, albeit clumsily. Remove them, and we have a crude transition. And where are we to place them? Professor Manly would dismiss them as an expansion of a marginal gloss—a device which has served the turn of innumerable critics. But the names cannot have been the marginal glosses of a scribe, *for they alliterate*. It is certain that whoever invented the names of wife *Work*, daughter *Do*, and son *Suffer* meant them to take their place in an alliterative text. Therefore the lines, if removed at all, must be placed elsewhere. But to insert them after ll. 89, 90, in the will, is to cause an interruption. A man does not name himself in the third person in his will.

It is not denied that the passage, as it stands, is clumsy, though not more so than many other passages in A. The point is that the removal

of the five lines does not make the passage less clumsy; whilst their insertion into the will is not so much clumsy as impossible.

And in a somewhat similar way, but on a much larger scale, the rearrangement of A's text proposed by Dr Bradley, whilst smoothing away an incoherency of the kind to which A is peculiarly prone, interferes with and disturbs the actual succession of his thought, as it develops itself in the vision of the Seven Deadly Sins, of the Pilgrimage to St Truth, and of Piers the Guide.

The poet's object in these visions is not to give a theologically accurate picture of the Seven Sins, carefully discriminating and differentiating. So long as we look for this we shall naturally fail fully to appreciate him, just as those who look in the Utopia for its author's picture of a perfect state fail to appreciate Sir Thomas More. More did not wish to draw a complete political chart of a perfect republic, nor did the A-poet wish to draw a complete theological chart of the seven deadly sins. The object of both is the same: in the language of Erasmus concerning More 'to show the dangers which threatened the Commonwealth of England<sup>1</sup>.' The evils from which the Commonwealth was suffering in the opinion of our poet were especially the rapacity of its upper classes and the laziness of its lower classes. So much we can gather from the prologue, where most of the people censured could be placed in the one class or the other. 'Do the duty of your calling, whatever it may be, and flee from covetousness' is again the gist of Passus I. Passus II—IV are then devoted more particularly to the corruption of the official classes. In Passus V—VII we return to idleness, more particularly that of the poor. Here appears Piers Plowman, who has had no part to play in the earlier vision. For Piers, as is shown by his very name, and that of his wife, is the antithesis of idleness. Piers is here by no means an ideal saint. He jangles with the ribald priest, 'in pure tene,' he even rends the precious charter sent by Truth Himself. Piers knows the way to Truth, not because he is impeccable, but because he has worked honestly<sup>2</sup>.

Clene consience *and* wyt kende me to his place,  
And dede me to sure hym to *serue* hym for eue;

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Ulrich von Hutten, ccccxlvii.

<sup>2</sup> This is well brought out in Gascoigne's *Steel Glass*, where all the faults of the ploughman are described in full:

I see you Peerce, my glasse was lately scowrde.  
But for they feed with frutes of their gret paines  
Both king and knight and priests in cloyster pent,  
Therefore I say that sooner some of them  
Shall scale the walles which leade us up to heaven, etc.

Bope to sowen and to setten<sup>1</sup> while I swynke miȝte.  
 I haue ben his folewere al þis fourty wynter,  
 Bope sowen his seed *and* sewide hise bestis,  
 And kepide his corn *and* cariede it to house,  
 Dyken *and* deluen *and* do what he hiȝte,  
 Wiþinne *and* wiþoute waytide his profit.

(A vi, 30.)

For the way to Truth, on which Piers can guide the pilgrims, is the way of honest labour. Piers' guidance of the pilgrims actually consists in setting them all to work, and with Hunger's help in reducing even Waster to submission (Passus VII). Then Truth gives his pardon to all who have laboured in their vocation (Passus VIII).

Hence it is not so strange that the A poet should have given no description of Lust; it is quite possible that he never even pretended to give a description of Wrath. This would indeed be 'a degree either of thoughtlessness or of stupidity not easily conceivable<sup>2</sup>' if our poet's end had been to describe the Seven Sins. But it is only his means towards an end; the end is a statement of the economic and social problems of his day. On these Lust or Wrath<sup>3</sup> have little bearing. Avarice is more to the point, for it affords a picture of the regrater: Gluttony gives an opening to describe workmen 'doing their deeds ill' and driving forth the long day in the tavern. Finally comes Sloth, and it is appropriate that Sloth should be the sinner who vows to seek Truth; for the seeking of Truth, we have seen, is the way of work. Robert, too, will polish his pike and go on his pilgrimage, and a thousand of men throng together and cry for grace to seek Truth. The palmer, a representative of the class of 'lubbers loth to work,' cannot tell the way to Truth.

Then after these four idlers, of different types, Gluttony, Sloth, Robert and the Palmer, Piers is introduced. He has laboured, and so he knows the way without needing any man to guide him. In doing his ordinary work 'setting and sowing' these forty winters, he has all the time been serving Truth.

Piers is the antithesis of the loafers who precede him: and when he says:

To penaunce *and* to pilgrimage wile I passe *with opere*.  
 For þi I wile, er I wende, do wryte my bequest,

<sup>1</sup> (to) sowen and (to) setten, from V: also in EIDgWDLAsH. TH<sub>2</sub> have sowe his seed: RU nowe and siþe.

<sup>2</sup> Bradley in the *Athenaeum*, April 21, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> B, of course, adds a Confession of Wrath. In accordance with the practice of both A and B, this is no mere account of an individual wrathful man. It is a protest against the hatred shown by members of the religious orders towards one another: and more particularly against that great scandal of the fourteenth century, the feud of the friar with other orders of the clergy.

we might expect that his Testament would be a contrast to the confessions of those who have slacked, whilst he has worked. And in fact we do find an exact parallelism between the confession of Sloth, and the Testament of Piers. Sloth has failed in his service to God, and vows amendment: Piers has paid his church dues and can claim his reward. Sloth has 'won wickedly': Piers has 'won truly.' Sloth will make good 'though his livelihood lacks' 'ere he wends hence': but as for Piers 'though he die to-night' *his* debts are quit, he paid 'ere he went to bed.'

And wiþ þe residue *and* þe remenaunt, be þe roode of Chestre,  
I wile seke Treuþe er I se Rome!<sup>1</sup>

says Sloth: and Piers echoes the words

And wiþ þe residue *and* þe remenaunt, be þe rode of Chestre,  
I wile worsshipe þere wiþ Treuþe in my lyeue.

Dr Bradley's rearrangement, on the other hand, separates the vow to seek Truth by nearly one hundred lines from the thronging crowds who cry for grace to seek him: it adds to the Confession of Avarice lines which, as has been urged by Professor Brown and Mr Knott<sup>2</sup>, are not only unnecessary there, but actually inconsistent.

Finally, it must be remembered that evidence which might be sufficient to show a probability of interpolations, or of lost or shifted leaves, in a one MS. text, is insufficient in the case of a text preserved in thirteen MSS., which seem to have remarkably few *common* errors, and the archetype of which, if not actually the author's holograph, was probably not far removed therefrom. When Prof. Manly suggests that ll. 71-4 of Passus VII are a scribe's gloss, which has been absurdly introduced into the text in a wrong position, it must be remembered that such a corruption postulates time and a succession of copyists. This difficulty is avoided by Dr Bradley's theory as to the origin of the 'Sloth' confusion; that the mistake was made by the shifting of a page of the author's rough notes before they were transcribed by the scrivener into a formal book. But are we justified in assuming that the poem, when it received its author's final inspection, was still in the form of notes on odd sheets of paper or parchment? The *Commedia* made Dante lean for many years<sup>3</sup>: *Troilus* did not produce this effect on

<sup>1</sup> Dr Bradley has suggested that these lines may be spurious. But there seems nothing to support this supposition. Spurious lines do not appear to be very common in the A-text: they seem to be confined almost invariably to one MS. or class of MSS., and the reason for their insertion is generally obvious.

<sup>2</sup> *The Nation* (New York), March 25, 1909; May 13, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxv, 3.



Chaucer, yet he spent many a day in correcting his scrivener's errors: Caxton, till age made him less industrious and more prone to mechanical devices, seems to have regarded it as naturally his business himself to transcribe his own works<sup>1</sup>. Yet Dante, Chaucer, and Caxton were all busy men of affairs. Are we justified in taking for granted that an obscure and probably poor writer, like the A-poet, employed the luxurious methods of modern journalism, left the publication of his poem entirely to the scrivener, and never then or in later years read it through again? For, had he done so, then *ex hypothesi* he would have noticed the mistake and had it put right. Though some erroneous transcripts might have got about, the corrected copies would also have been multiplied, and it is hardly likely that our very large collection of A-text MSS. would have failed to include some descendants of the corrected copies.

Of course it is *possible* that our author sent his work in loose sheets to the scrivener, and never looked at it again: it is stated that Dr Johnson sent *Rasselas* to the printer sheet by sheet, as it was finished, and never re-read it. But in *Rasselas* Dr Johnson, writing for money under extreme pressure, put into a certain form thoughts which he would probably have preferred to express through another medium. In *Piers Plowman* we have a book which can only have been written because its author loved to write it; a book which we should guess had 'made its author lean,' stamped to an extraordinary degree with his character and mode of thought. That that mode of thought was not perfectly orderly and coherent I have tried briefly to show. Is an explanation quite satisfactory, which, in order to excuse our poet of neglect of strict order and coherency in one passage, necessarily accuses him of neglect of his whole poem? Of the two possibilities is not this last neglect the more improbable?

It must be remembered that the question is not whether, on the whole, the text would make better sense if rearranged. Where MS. evidence is equally divided we can, of course, only choose the most plausible arrangement. But here there is no particle of MS. evidence in favour of a rearrangement of the received text. The proposed rearrangements are pure conjecture. Unless the advantage to be gained by the rearrangement is very great indeed a cautious editor would not, under these circumstances, accept it; still less found a theory upon it.

Only (1) if the MS. reading absolutely refuses to make sense, and

<sup>1</sup> *The Recuyell of the Histories of Troye, sub fin.*

(2) if the proposed rearrangement of the text is so convincing that it has only to be stated to be at once recognized as right, do we get that certainty which is necessary, before we can build argument as to authorship upon conjectural emendation.

I have tried to prove that the first of these conditions is not the case: that the second is not the case is proved by the fact that those who are most convinced that some confusion has taken place are quite unable to agree wherein the error exactly consists. Three rearrangements are suggested: that of Prof. Manly, followed by Mr Knott; that of Dr Bradley, followed by Dr Furnivall and M. Jusserand; and that arrived at independently by Prof. Brown and Mr Hall. And each critic finds serious difficulties in the rearrangements suggested by the others.

Even Prof. Manly's supporters must, I think, allow that the element of certainty, which is necessary before we can use the 'shifted leaf' theory as a basis on which to build other theories, is wanting. We must therefore turn to the other arguments brought forward by Prof. Manly.

#### V. B'S MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF A.

Many instances are alleged by Prof. Manly, in the *Cambridge History*, in which B has misunderstood A, and C has misunderstood B. These cases have been examined by M. Jusserand in Sections v and vii of his reply. Jusserand *here* does not accept Manly's data whilst denying his conclusions, but denies data, conclusions and all. For the most part, therefore, it is enough to refer the reader to M. Jusserand's very sufficient comments. In view of Prof. Manly's reply, one or two supplementary points not raised by M. Jusserand may perhaps be added.

(1) 'B has misunderstood A, or spoiled his picture,' Prof. Manly asserts, in B II, 21, where 'Lewte is introduced as the leman of the lady Holy Church and spoken of as feminine.' M. Jusserand has shown that there is no incompatibility between Lewte being feminine and also being called a lemman. But this hardly needed proof. Prof. Manly's point, as he explains in his reply<sup>1</sup>, is 'that here the *leman* of a lady is spoken of [by B] as feminine' and that this involves 'a spoiling of the conception of A, and a misunderstanding or forgetfulness of it.'

In A Holy Church is certainly represented as a lady: but that B even momentarily forgot or misunderstood this there is nothing to show.

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Philology*, vii, 116 (1909).

For elsewhere B uses *leman* in a context which shows that he does not wish to emphasize any difference of sex. In XIV 298-9 he interprets 'paupertas sanitatis mater' as

moder of helthe, a frende in alle fondynges,  
And for þe land euere a leche, a lemman of al clenness.

And that in the 'Holy Church' passage *leman* is used in a similar broad and general sense, simply as 'beloved,' is proved by the context. B cannot have intended to make Lewte the 'betrothed' or 'sweetheart' of Holy Church, for *only ten lines lower he has allotted that part to Mercy and the merciful*. God, says the lady Holy Church,

hath ȝoue me mercy · to marye with my-self ;  
And what man be merciful · and lelly me loue,  
Schal be my lorde and I his leef · in þe heize heuene.

It seems hardly possible for Prof. Manly to contend that B, who added these lines, meant Holy Church to be masculine. If he did, then the self-contradiction in B is as great as the contradiction between A and B: and whatever force the argument has to prove that A is not B is equally valid to prove that B is not B.

(2) In B the rat describes '*segges* in the City of London' who wear collars: these *segges* C explains as *gret syres*. Therefore C cannot, Prof. Manly urges, have been B, who by *segges* meant dogs. But if so, what is the point of the mention of the *City of London*? One need not go up to London to see a dog wearing a collar<sup>1</sup>. Surely the reference is to the official dress of great city magistrates,—mayors and masters, knights and squires: and the humour lies in the rat's taking these officials for what they are, dangerous beasts, who prey upon the commonwealth. Only by this interpretation can we get any sense out of *in the City of London*, or any humour out of the whole passage.

It is unfortunate that in the *Cambridge History* space did not allow of Prof. Manly developing his argument fully: for in many cases it is not clear wherein the supposed misunderstanding of A by B or B by C lies. And in no case has Prof. Manly attempted more than dogmatic assertion. What the assertion is worth can only be estimated by comparing minutely the texts of A and B. There is not space to so examine all the alleged misunderstandings. The following instance selected for examination is certainly not unfair to Prof. Manly; it is a point on which he has throughout laid special stress.

<sup>1</sup> Representations of dogs wearing collars are exceedingly common on sepulchral monuments of the late 14th century all over England.

'In 11, 74 ff. B does not understand that the feoffment covers precisely the provinces of the seven deadly sins; and, by elaborating the passage, spoils the unity of the intention<sup>1</sup>.'

Here is the passage in A:

To be present in pride for pouere or for<sup>2</sup> riche,  
 Wiþ þe Erldom of enuye for euere to laste,  
 Wiþ alle þe lordsshippe of lecherie in<sup>3</sup> lengþe and in brede,  
 Wiþ þe kingdom of coueitise I croune hem to gidere,  
 And al þe Ile of vsurie and auarice þe faste<sup>4</sup>;  
 Glotonye and grete opes I gyue hem to gidere,  
 Wiþ alle þe delites of lust þe deuil for to serue;  
 In al þe *seignourie* of slouþe I sese<sup>5</sup> hem togidere.

This is clearly meant to cover the seven sins, though it does not do so, as Manly asserts, 'precisely': for Wrath is missing. Avarice and Gluttony are expanded by coupling with them their respective allied sins, Usury and Great Oaths.

Prof. Manly supposes the omission of Wrath to be due to the error of an early copyist. But it is begging the question to first emend a text into precision, against the evidence of all the MSS., and then to base an argument upon the precision of the text so emended. And even the addition of Wrath does not make A's enumeration of the sins 'precise.' Prof. Manly has not noticed that his 'careful artist' has counted Lust twice over. This is concealed by a textual corruption in the Vernon MS., but a collation of all the MSS. shows it to be indisputably the case.

Turning to B, we find that he has elaborated the passage by the addition of many other allied vices: so far however from having failed to see that the charter covers the provinces of the seven sins (1) he has added *Wrath*, and (2) in adding details of cognate sins has been careful to put each under the appropriate head of the Deadly Sin from which it springs. B, in fact, shows more care to classify his sins properly here than A does when he is avowedly dealing with the Seven Sins in *Passus v.*

Let us take the text exactly as it stands in B:

To be prynces in pryde and pouerte to dispise.

Under Pride we rightly have, as one of its branches, *Despite*, which is mentioned as a branch of pride both in the *Parsons Tale*, and (under

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History*, II, 32: see also *Modern Philology* III (Jan. 1906): VII, 121 (July 1909).

<sup>2</sup> *oper* TH<sub>2</sub> or for RUEIDgWDLVH.

<sup>3</sup> lecherie in V omits.

<sup>4</sup> faste TRUDg false DVH. *Corrupt or wanting* EIH<sub>2</sub>WL.

<sup>5</sup> sese, ceese, *à c.* RUEIH<sub>2</sub>DgWLVH. set TD. As *wanting* throughout.

the name of *onworþnesse*) in the *Ayenbite of Inwit*. The three branches of this *Despise*, according to the *Ayenbite*, are (1) *disesteeming* others, (2) *dishonouring* others, (3) *disobeying* others.

To bakbite and to bosten · and here fals witnessse,  
To scorne and to scolde · and sclaudere to make.

*Backbiting*, *bearing false witness*, and *making slander* are only forms of *disesteeming* others. *To scorn and to scold* is to *dishonour* and *insult* others ('þe vifte out-kestinge of þe ilke stocke is scorn' says the *Ayenbite*, under *Arrogance* the third bough of *Pride*). *Boasting* clearly comes under *Pride*: 'Avauntour...he that bosteth of the harm or of the bountee that he hath doon' comes second on the Parson's list of those guilty of *Pride*; *yelpingge* (boasting) is the fourth twig of the third bough of *Pride* in the *Ayenbite*.

Vnboxome and bolde · to breke þe ten hestes.

*Inobedience* is placed first among the branches of *Pride* in the *Parson's Tale*: to think 'hou uelezipe þou hest y-by *onboʒsam*' comes in the *Ayenbite* under the second section of *Pride*.

*To break the ten hests*. 'He that disobeyeth for despyt to the comandements of God' is placed first in the *Parson's Tale* on the list of the Proud. And rightly, for *Pride* is 'the general rote of alle harmes; for of þis rote springen certein braunches, as Ire, Envye, Accidie or Slewthe, Avarice or Coveitise, Glotonye, Lecherye.'

Every one of the sins added by B under *Pride* is then strictly appropriate to that sin.

And þe Erl dome of enuye · and Wratthe togideres,  
With þe chastelet of chest · and chateryng-oute-of-resoun.

*Chiding and chattering* rightly come under *Wrathe*: 'Vor huanne wreþe arist betuene tuay men: þer is uerst chidinge' (*Ayenbite*, p. 30). Both are specifically mentioned under *Wrath* in the *Parson's Tale*: 'Chydinge and reproche' (§ 42), 'ydel wordes, Ianglinge, Iaperie' (§ 47). If it is objected that we have already had these sins under *Pride*, that is to be ascribed, not to the much abused B-poet, but to Mediæval Theology: the same repetition comes in the *Parson's Tale*, where *Jangling* is enumerated under both heads<sup>1</sup> (§§ 24, 47).

The counte of coueitise · and alle þe costes aboute  
That is vsure and avarice · alle I hem graunte  
In bargaines and in brokages · with al þe borghes of theft.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Manly has himself pointed out that 'the Seven Sins were treated as tempers or tendencies out of which particular misdeeds grow. And, naturally, the same deed, the same sin, may originate in any one of several different tempers or tendencies.' Undoubtedly. Yet the whole case for the 'missing leaf' in *Passus v* and for the 'mis-understanding' here rests upon unwillingness to recognize this.

The two first subdivisions of 'auarice' or 'couaytise' in the *Ayenbite* are *Usury* and *Theft*<sup>1</sup>. The eighth is *Chaffer*<sup>2</sup>, which is only another way of expressing *Bargains and Brocages*.

And al þe lordeship of lecherye · in lenthe and in brede  
 As in werkes and in wordes · and waitynges with eies,  
 And in wedes and in wisshynges · and with ydel thouztes  
 Ther as wille wolde · and werkmanship failleth.  
 Glotonye he gaf hem eke · and grete othes togydere,  
 And alday to drynke · at dyuerse tauernes,  
 And there to iangle and to iape · and iugge here euene cristene,  
 And in fastyng-dayes to frete · ar ful tyme were.  
 And þanne to sitten and soupen—

The coupling of Great Oaths with Gluttony may seem strange; but A had done it in *his* enumeration. B can then hardly be charged *here* with spoiling A's picture. Yet, indeed, evil speaking of all kinds goes with gluttony *as being a sin of the mouth* (*Ayenbite*, p. 50). To jangle and jape and judge one's fellow Christians comes in then quite rightly here.

—til slepe hem assaille  
 And breden as burgh-swyn · and bedden hem esily.  
 Tyl sleuth and slepe · slyken his sides  
 And þanne wanhope to awake hym so....

It will hardly be denied that both Sleep and Wanhope come under Sloth. Both are mentioned under this head in the *Ayenbite* (pp. 31, 34) and the *Parson's Tale* (§ 56).

B then, in elaborating the passage, has arranged the faults under the heading of the respective deadly sin; and he has completed A's imperfect enumeration by adding *Wrath*. How can it be stated that 'B does not understand that the feoffment covers precisely the provinces of the seven deadly sins,' and that we have instead 'an unsystematic general collection of all the sins the author could think of'? The sins overlap, but not more so than in Chaucer's or Dan Michel's, or, what is more to the point, in B's own account of the Seven Sins. When Prof. Manly supposes<sup>3</sup> that in adding, among other sins, *Unbuxomhood*, *Boasting*, *Scorning*, and *Bearing of False Witness*, B cannot have understood that he was dealing with Pride, he must surely have overlooked the fact that these very sins are mentioned by B in Passus XIII 276—313 as subdivisions of Pride<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> þe uerste is gaelinge. þe oþer þyefþe (p. 34).

<sup>2</sup> þe eʒtende boʒ of auarice is chapfare (p. 44).

<sup>3</sup> *Modern Philology*, vii, 121.

<sup>4</sup> As to Dan Michel's classification see note at end.

## VI. DIFFERENCES OF DIALECT BETWEEN A, B AND C.

Prof. Manly concludes his case, 'a careful study of the MSS. will show that between A, B and C there exist dialectal differences incompatible with the supposition of a single author. This can be easily tested in the case of the pronouns and the verb *are*<sup>1</sup>.'

But this is as if one should go into an asylum for the blind, and tell one's hearers that they can easily see a thing for themselves.

For, of the 47 MSS. only four are in print: the Vernon MS. of the A-text, the Laud and Trinity MSS. of the B-text, the Phillipps MS. of the C-text. The twelve unprinted MSS. of the A-text differ widely in point of dialect from the printed text, and from one another—we have a Southern text, a Northern text, and many varieties of Midland, besides texts which it is difficult to classify. The B and C texts also vary in the different MSS. The four printed texts were selected for publication on grounds quite other than those of dialect: indeed, in one case, that of the Vernon A-text, it has always been recognized that the dialect is the scribe's, not the author's: 'the dialect in which the poem was first written has been modified by a Southern scribe, whence the numerous Southern forms<sup>2</sup>.'

How then is the reader to test Prof. Manly's statement?

Fortunately Prof. Skeat has printed a passage of eleven lines from all the MSS., and as it happens, at any rate in the A and B MSS., these lines are most extraordinarily rich in those forms which Prof. Manly has suggested as tests<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Camb. Hist.*, vol. II, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Skeat in Cl. Press edit., vol. II, p. lxxvi.

<sup>3</sup> In the C text the earlier portion of the passage was so changed as to be useless for the test proposed. A comparison shows:

1. 1.	<i>ben</i> ( <i>beþ</i> , <i>be</i> , &c.)	{ found in thirteen A-MSS., <i>er</i> in one
		{ " " sixteen B-MSS., <i>are</i> in one
		{ " " C wanting
1. 5.	<i>are</i> ( <i>aru</i> , <i>aren</i> , &c.)	{ " " ten A-MSS., <i>ben</i> in four
		{ " " all seventeen B-MSS.
		{ " " C wanting
1. 7.	<i>thei</i> ( <i>they</i> , &c.)	{ " " all fourteen A-MSS.
		{ " " all thirteen B-MSS.
		{ " " C wanting
1. 8.	<i>hem</i> ( <i>hym</i> , &c.)	{ " " twelve A-MSS., <i>þaim</i> in one
		{ " " fifteen B-MSS., <i>them</i> in one
		{ " " all C-MSS.
1. 9.	<i>here</i> ( <i>hire</i> , <i>heore</i> , &c.)	{ " " thirteen A-MSS., <i>þair</i> in one
		{ " " sixteen B-MSS., <i>theyre</i> in one
		{ " " all C-MSS.
1. 10.	<i>thei</i> ( <i>they</i> , <i>thay</i> , &c.)	{ " " ten A-MSS., <i>he</i> in four
		{ " " all seventeen B-MSS.
		{ " " thirteen C-MSS., <i>hy</i> in one.

It would appear, *if we dare generalize from these eleven lines* (which, of course, it would be rash to do), that the A-poet used *are* and *be* indiscriminately, and preferred *they* in the nominative<sup>1</sup>, *hem* and *here* in the oblique cases. In this he seems to have been followed by B and C. Nor is it only when they have A before them that B and C adhere to this rule. If we can take the Laud and Phillipps MSS. as fair texts of B and C respectively, we find that in the new matter which they add<sup>2</sup> both follow the same practice. So that, to judge by the only passage in which, at present, the ordinary student can test it, Prof. Manly's dialect formula breaks down utterly. As to the results of a more detailed examination, Mr Grattan, who during our collation of the different A-MSS. has devoted particular attention to points bearing on the question of dialect, informs me that he has, so far, found nothing to substantiate Prof. Manly's statement in the smallest degree.

So complicated, and often so contradictory, are the dialectal forms in the different A-MSS. that months, or years, of study would be necessary before any man could master them fully. An attempt to classify them could hardly fill less than three or four hundred pages, and the compiler of those pages would be lucky indeed if his results satisfied either himself or others. For first he must fix the dialect of the different MSS. which lie behind our extant copies. From these hypothetical texts he must construct the dialect of the MS. from which they all derive. Yet this archetype may be far removed, as Prof. Manly realizes, from the original author's autograph. By the same hypothetical processes the student must then formulate the dialect of his original B-text. He must then decide whether the difference between his theoretical A-dialect and his theoretical B-dialect is too great to allow of their being both the speech of one and the same man, allowing for an interval of fifteen years. Given two specified texts, it would often be impossible to decide this. It will be hard indeed to prove inconsistency when we have to work upon two theoretical texts, each thrice removed from any sure basis of evidence.

1. 7. Four B-MSS. are here defective and have no pronoun.

1. 8. The Lincoln's Inn MS., Ashburnham cxxx and Bodley 851 are corrupt or wanting here.

I have followed Skeat's enumeration of A B and C-MSS.

Many of the MSS. are compounded from two texts, and in strict accuracy should not be counted in comparative statistics of the different texts.

<sup>1</sup> Probably not to the exclusion of *hy*; *hy may* be the right reading in l. 10 of the extract, for the four MSS. supporting it (*he*) are all excellent ones. *Hy* seems to be necessitated by the alliteration in C XII, 216, and is found elsewhere in C.

<sup>2</sup> Both *are* and forms of *be* occur everywhere in B and C. The alliteration seems to show that in B XII, 195 (and perhaps also in B XIV, 222) *ben* was the original form.



This most difficult task Prof. Manly has undertaken. He has announced his conclusion, but so far he has quoted in support of this conclusion the evidence of one line only (A III, 30).

In his answer to M. Jusserand, who dwells, most justly, on the contradictory nature of the evidence of the MSS., Prof. Manly defends his statement thus:

‘If we find that in B *she* is, according to the evidence of all extant MSS., the form of this pronoun in the source from which they are all derived, and that in A *heo* is, according to the evidence of all extant MSS., the corresponding form, we are justified in concluding that, in all probability, the authors of the two versions differed as to the form of this pronoun<sup>1</sup>.’

But there might be considerable difference between the two versions without that difference being ‘incompatible with the supposition of a single author.’

For the theory which Prof. Manly is setting himself to disprove is that of a William [Langland] connected with Shipton in Oxfordshire and Malvern in Worcestershire, both places bordering on, if not actually within, the area of Southern influence, who shortly before or shortly after writing his A version came up to London; and subsequently rewrote it after a lapse of fifteen and again of thirty years. *Ex hypothesi* we should expect certain dialectal differences between A, B, and C. We should expect the sprinkling of Southern or Western peculiarities to be most prominent in A, whilst we should expect B and C to approximate more nearly to the language of Chaucer.

Nothing would be proved if it were shown that A and B alike use both *are* and *be*, but in different proportions: or that whilst both A and B use *they, here, hem*, A has also a sprinkling of *hie* forms, which become much rarer or even disappear in B and C: or that A can be proved to have used *heo* here and there, whilst B used it rarely or not at all.

But, in point of fact, does the evidence of all the extant MSS. prove that A used *heo* and B *she*? Prof. Manly does not assert that it does, but merely what would follow if it did.

Let us take the first instance where the form occurs in the A-text.

I was a ferd of hire face, þeiȝ heo fair were,  
And seide, Mercy, ma dame, what is þis to mene?  
Ðe tour of þe toft, quaþ heo, treuþe is þere innue.

In this passage *heo* is the reading of four A-MSS.<sup>2</sup>, *she, sho, che*, of eight<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Mod. Phil.* VII, 124.

<sup>2</sup> TLVH.

<sup>3</sup> RUEIH<sub>2</sub>DgWD: W corrupt in one line: As wanting.

Nor is this an unfair example. In many of the A-MSS. *she* is used almost or quite exclusively. This does not of course prove that *heo* was not the original form in A: but it was hardly such 'according to the evidence of all the extant MSS.'

The readings of one line only are quoted by Prof. Manly in support of his thesis regarding the dialect of the MSS.; and then in order to show how B, whilst usually altering A's *heo* to *she*, has been occasionally compelled to keep it, in order to preserve the alliteration.

'In A III, 30,' says Prof. Manly, 'all the MSS. have

Hendeliche themne heo · behihte hem the same.'

But they have not: *heo* is here the reading of five A-MSS. only<sup>1</sup>: *sche*, *sho* is the reading of eight<sup>2</sup>.

The corresponding line of the B-text, Prof. Manly says, 'has the same form *heo*, in spite of the fact that *she* is the regular form in B for the feminine pronoun. Three MSS., indeed, COB, have *she*, but they form a small sub-group, and *she* is clearly due to a correction in their immediate source.'

Now, whether or not COB are rightly described as 'a small sub-group,' they certainly do not stand alone in reading *she* here. For this is also the reading of the two other Cambridge University MSS. Ll. 4. 14 and Gg. 4. 31; of the Corpus Coll. Oxford MS.; of Cotton Calig. A XI, and of the Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 10574. The Crowley text, founded upon a lost MS., also reads *she*; but perhaps this should not be counted. We have eight MSS., therefore, which favour the reading *she* against four<sup>3</sup> which have the reading *heo*.

The reason of these errors is clear. The Vernon text of A, printed by Skeat, reads *heo*: and as no variants are quoted in the critical notes Prof. Manly has, not unnaturally, assumed that all the MSS. agree in this reading. Similarly in the B-text, only COB are quoted by Skeat as differing from the Laud reading. But it must be remembered (1) that since, and largely in consequence of, Skeat's editions, many important new MSS. have been discovered; (2) that owing to the wide

<sup>1</sup> TH<sub>2</sub>LVH.

<sup>2</sup> RUEIDgWDA<sub>s</sub>.

<sup>3</sup> Laud 581, Rawl. Poet. 38, Trin. Coll. Camb. B. 15. 17, Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 35287 (formerly Ashburnham 129). All statements as to the B-MSS. are subject to the limitation that the former Ashburnham 130, and Phillipps 8252 (both uncollated), have not yet been seen by either Mr Grattan or myself: otherwise the readings quoted are from our own examination of the MSS. Ashburnham 130 was not, as is generally supposed, acquired by the British Museum, and information as to its present position would be welcomed. The Yates Thompson MS. (now at Newnham) is defective here.

variations between the different A-MSS. it was not possible to note, in the collations, any but the more important variants: synonyms such as *ac* and *but*<sup>1</sup>, and *sche* and *heo*, were not always noted; (3) only those MSS. which seemed most important from the point of view of fixing the text were collated: and the MS. which offers the best readings is by no means necessarily the best from the point of view of dialect.

It follows that work upon the dialect of Piers Plowman should be based upon a new and minute examination of the MSS. To Prof. Manly belongs the credit of having realized the necessity for a more elaborate collation of the A-MSS., and of having caused such an examination to be made. Had Mr Grattan and I known of this we should not have begun our work. We are glad to take this opportunity of acknowledging that to Mr Knott, who undertook the collation of the A-MSS. at the instance of Prof. Manly, belongs the credit of having been the first to examine minutely all these MSS.: a task which, thanks to Prof. Skeat's labours, is now a comparatively easy and straightforward one.

But Prof. Manly does not claim that his views as to dialect were based upon Mr Knott's collations, which have not yet been published. His assertion that his conclusions 'can be easily tested' seems to exclude the supposition of their being based upon any private or exclusive information. And, though we all know how fatally easy it is to make mistakes in collation, surely Prof. Manly is not the man to go wrong eight times out of thirteen, on the question whether *heo* or *she* is the reading of a specified line, if he had before him collations of the MSS.

But if Prof. Manly's view is based only upon published documents, then it is based almost exclusively upon Vernon; for, as has been shown above, the collations appended by Skeat to Vernon are not minute enough for dialectal investigation. And Vernon is admittedly an unsafe guide in matters of dialect.

No doubt Prof. Manly will ultimately defend his view of the dialect after an examination of all the MSS. Yet this will be but Jedburgh Justice, if, as seems to be the case, he had arrived at his conclusions before examining the evidence.

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction to Skeat's edition of the A-text, p. xxix.

## VII. PROBLEMS OF THE TEXTS.

Prof. Manly also draws attention to metrical and alliterative differences between A, B and C<sup>1</sup>. But here again we are very much at the mercy of the MSS. Rosenthal long ago formed elaborate lists of all exceptional verses in A, showing how they were altered and corrected in B and C<sup>2</sup>. But in a large number of these instances the peculiarity is not that of A, but simply that of the Vernon MS.: the line is to be found in the great majority of A-MSS. in the same form in which it is given in B. Any statistics of metre or alliteration are without value, until we have before us full collations of all the MSS.

The same answer applies to Prof. Manly's statement that B took over 'variant readings of the A-text' unchanged from the MS. of A used as a basis. If this can be proved, it will certainly be a very strong argument. But the more the MSS. are examined the more probable does it seem that these variants from the received text of A, adopted by B, are, in fact, the true readings. That this is so in the majority of cases seems hardly to admit of dispute.

Of course it is conceivable that, when all the evidence has been sifted, a number of instances in which B *has* adopted an inferior reading will be left over, sufficient to support, if not to prove, Prof. Manly's theory. Yet the utmost caution is necessary here, lest we should make the writers of the B and C versions responsible for what, after all, are but the errors of their scribes. For no B-MS., not even the famous and excellent Laud 581, can be regarded as representing the original B-text with anything like complete accuracy. Even when supported by the great majority of the other MSS., Laud 581 is sometimes wrong. For example, in the scene of the Harrowing of Hell, Christ claims that He, the King of Kings, may save the wicked from death, since, if an earthly king comes

There þe felow thole sholde deth or otherwyse,  
Lawe wolde, he ȝeue hym lyf, if he loked on hym. (B XVIII, 380-1.)

*deth or otherwyse*, the reading of Laud and the received text, can hardly be right; for the point is that even the extreme penalty may be remitted by a king. The right reading is obviously that of the C-text *dep oþer Iuwise* (justice, execution). This is the reading of only three

<sup>1</sup> *Cambr. Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, vol. II, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Anglia*, I 414 (1878).

B.-MSS., whilst Laud's corrupt reading has the support of ten<sup>1</sup>. It does not follow, then, that Laud's reading is necessarily right, even when supported by the great bulk of the MS. evidence.

Numerous and good as the B.-MSS. are, their close agreement may be due to their being accurate transcripts of one, not always quite accurate, archetype. To arrive at the original B we must supplement the evidence of the extant MSS. by the evidence derived from C. For C, whether or not he was identical with B, must have had before him an exceedingly early MS. of B.

Two instances will serve to show how necessary caution is, in arguing as to B's textual corruption of A, or C's textual corruption of B. In A Pro. 41 some A.-MSS. speak of beggars with bags *bretful* or *bredful ycrammed*, another of beggars whose bags *with bred full be cromed*. The old rule, that the harder reading is to be preferred, would lead us to suppose *bretful* (*bredful*) right; for this would easily be corrupted into *of bread full*, whilst the reverse process is hardly credible. A, then, almost certainly wrote *bretful* (*bredful*). The B.-MSS. are unanimously in favour of *of bread full*<sup>2</sup>. It might be argued that 'the B-reviser' had before him a MS. of A with this reading, and took it over into his revised text. But when we come to the C-text we find the original reading *bretful* reappearing there. The advocates of separate authorship will have to admit that there *was* a B.-MS. (viz. that used by C as a basis) which had the reading *bretful*; for the same line of argument which led us in the first place to decide that *bretful* in A could not be corrupted from *of bread full* again applies here. *Of bread full* is not, then, a genuine B-reading at all, but a very early B corruption, inherited by all extant B.-MSS., but not belonging to the original B. Hence no argument can be drawn from it.

So with regard to C. Perhaps the best known textual variant in C is that in the second line of the Prologue

Y shop me in-to shrobbis

where B has, of course, *shroudes*.

It might be argued that *shrobbes* is merely a scribal blunder for *shroudes* or *shrowde*, for the confusion of *b* and *w* is frequent and easy.

<sup>1</sup> *With the limitation, as before, that Ashburnham 130 and Phillippis 8252 have not been examined.* *decp* or *oþer* *Iuwise* is the reading of Trin. Coll. Camb. B. 15. 17, followed by Camb. Univ. Ll. 4. 14 and Gg. 4. 31. *The reading deth* or *otherwise* is followed by Rawl. Poet. 38, Yates Thompson, Corpus Oxf. 201, Camb. Univ. Dd. 1. 17, Bodl. 814, Brit. Mus. Add. 10574, Cotton Cal. A. xi. *deth* *oþer* *elles* Brit. Mus. Add. 35287 (*formerly* Ashburnham 129), Crowley, *ouþer* *oþer* *wise* Oriol 79.

<sup>2</sup> Corpus Oxf. 201, Rawl. Poet. 38 *wanting*; Bodley 814, Cotton Cal. A. xi, Brit. Mus. Add. 10574 are here C.-MSS.: Ash. 130, Phillippis, 8252, *not seen*: *the other nine* of *bred ful*.

If so, C, who adopted such a blunder in the second line of his revision, could hardly be the original poet. But is *shrobbis* a genuine C-reading at all? It is the reading of all the MSS. collated by Skeat and of others. But an examination of the uncollated C-MSS. shows five giving the reading *a shrowde* or *shrowdes*. *Shrobbis* is then presumably a corruption of an early MS. of C, from which a large number of the best C-MSS. derive: but not of the actual C-reviser<sup>1</sup>.

### VIII. STYLE AND VIEWS.

There remains the argument as to differences of method and interests. But what man's methods and interests are absolutely the same (and it is *absolute* agreement that is demanded) at 30, at 45, and at 60? If the discrepancies pointed out by Prof. Manly under this head are sufficient to prove anything, then no English author from before Chaucer to after William Morris can escape being divided into four or five.

And are the methods and interests of A and B different? To return for a moment to the question of A's coherency and B's incoherency. Prof. Manly summarizes a passage in B showing his incapacity for consecutive thinking. M. Jusserand replies by summarizing a passage in A, which, he claims, is equally incoherent. 'Any man's work,' retorts Prof. Manly, 'will appear incoherent in an outline which omits the links of his thought.' Precisely. But can Prof. Manly be certain that he has not overlooked the links of B's thought?

As to B being 'incapable of visualizing a group or keeping his view steady enough to imagine or depict a developing action'<sup>2</sup>—this is one of the points on which it is difficult to argue. Many will feel that B has shown this power, quite as strongly as A, in a number of passages, from the Rat-Parliament onwards.

<sup>1</sup> *shrobbis etc.*, Phillipps 8231, Laud 656, Harl. 2376, Douce 104, Cott. Vesp. B. xvr, Bib. Reg. 18 B. xvii, Camb. Univ. Ff. 5. 35, Corpus Coll. Camb. 293, Trin. Coll. Dub. D. 4. 1., Camb. Univ. Add. 4325.

*shrowdes*, Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 35157; Add. MS. 34779 (formerly Phillipps 9056).

*a schrowde*, Bodl. 814; Brit. Mus. Add. 10574; Cotton Calig. A. xi.

*wanting* Digby 102, Digby 171, Camb. Univ. Dd. 3. 13. Hehester is illegible and here an A-text. Bodley 851 reads *schrodus*, but is corrupt and here practically a B-text.

Phillipps 8231 has not been seen, but as it has been completely printed by Skeat this matters less than in the case of the minor MSS. The other readings are quoted from examination of the MSS. by Mr Grattan or myself. We hope, next year, to print some notes on the relationship of B and C MSS., especially in passages bearing upon problems of the A-text.

<sup>2</sup> *Cambridge History*, vol. II, p. 32.

Against the fact that a careful study of the 'mental powers and qualities' of A and B has convinced Prof. Manly that these writers cannot be identical, we can only note that precisely the same study has convinced many other students of the exact contrary, and is still convincing them. Most readers have noticed some tendency towards a weakening in C: and on this Mr T. Hall has based his most interesting argument<sup>1</sup> as to difference of authorship. But twenty years ago Skeat anticipated this argument<sup>2</sup>, pointing out how the pedantry of C is already manifest, though less fully developed, in B.

### IX. LONG WILL.

It is not argued that A, B, and C are the same man, but only that the arguments so far brought forward are insufficient to prove that they are not. And we have a right to demand strong proof, for there is strong evidence, both internal and external, for William, if not William Langland, having been the author of all three versions.

The external evidence has been marshalled by M. Jusserand; it is weighty, though its exact value is difficult to gauge. But the internal evidence is probably more conclusive.

'Long Will,' says Prof. Manly, is 'obviously as much a creation of the Muse as Piers the Plowman.' But it has not been noted that the A-poet (foreseeing, it may be, the rise of the Higher Criticism, as 'B' foresaw the fall of the Abbot of Abingdon) has expressly stated that *Will* was his very name.

A muchel man, me þouȝte, lik to my selue,  
Com *and* callide me be my kynde name.  
What art þou, quath I þo, þat my name knowist? (A ix, 61-3.)

The tall stranger is 'Thought.' Thought answers, in part, the poet's questions as to *Dowel*, *Dobet*, and *Dobest*: but the full answer can only be given by Wit, to whom Thought accordingly introduces the poet:

Þanne þouȝt in þat tyme seide þis wordis:  
Where þat Dowel *and* Dobet *and* Dobest beþ in londe,  
Here is Wil wolde wyte, ȝif Wit couþe hym teche. (A ix, 116-8.)

If Will is only a 'conventional name' what does the poet mean by emphasising it in this way? Surely he meant something, as Dante

<sup>1</sup> *Mod. Lang. Rev.* Oct. 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Clarendon Press edit. 1886, vol. II, p. xvi.

meant something when he called attention to his own name, uttered by Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise :

Quando mi volsi al suon del nome mio,  
Che di necessità qui si registra.

'That *Will* is the name given to the figure of the dreamer by four and possibly all five of the writers' is no more 'obvious' than that Dante is the name given to the figure of the dreamer by the second of the three anonymous Florentines who respectively wrote the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*. More than a dogmatic assertion would be necessary to prove either statement. For, before the invention of the title-page, the surest way in which an author could mark his work was by introducing his name into the body of it. And if he not only does this, but expressly insists that it is his very name, then we have evidence which it will need much to overthrow. The great majority of the English poets who lived prior to the introduction of printing, and whose names are known to us, recorded those names in the text of their poems. Cynewulf, Layamon, Orm, Robert 'of Gloucester,' Minot, Gower, Chaucer, Hoccleve, Lydgate, Ashby all did so. Where, as often, the name is put into the mouth of an imaginary character, we know quite well that the name itself is not imaginary.

Was Dan John as much a creation of the muse as the Host who demanded a tale from him<sup>1</sup>? Or Hoccleve as the beggar with whom he conversed<sup>2</sup>? Or Geoffrey as the eagle which carried him to the House of Fame?

It should also be noted that in one place the name *Will* is used in a manner incompatible with such a distinction as Prof. Manly seeks to draw, between the visionary dreamer and the writer who created him :

Þanne were marchauntis merye, many wepe for ioye,  
And ʒaf Wille for his writyng wollene cloþis,  
For<sup>3</sup> he coupide þus here clause þei coupe<sup>4</sup> hym gret mede. (A VIII, 42.)

These lines cannot refer to Will in the vision, who weeps at the bidding of Repentance, or to the figure who stands behind Piers and peeps over his shoulder at the charter. Will, in the vision, neither writes nor copies any charter. The lines have no meaning unless they mark the name of the *writer* of the vision.

We have, then, references to Will as the writer and the seer of the vision, in each of the two sections of the A-text, which Prof. Manly

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of Thebes* by John Lidgate in Speght's Chaucer 1598, fol. 370 b.

<sup>2</sup> *De Regimine Principum*, stanza 267.

<sup>3</sup> And for TH<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>4</sup> ʒeue TH<sub>2</sub>D. EAs wanting.



would attribute to different authors. And in one of these passages the author incidentally refers to himself as tall, *a muchel man*.

Turning now to the B-text, we have the famous passage in which the seer of the vision says

My name is Longe Wille. (B xv, 148.)

Prof. Manly suggests that here *Long Will* is not an indication of the author's name: Long Will is 'a popular locution implying long experience and observation,' just as 'when an American replies to some statement difficult of belief by saying "I'm from Missouri, you'll have to show me" it is not safe to infer that the speaker has ever set foot in Missouri....This very common locution merely indicates that the speaker is not of a credulous nature, and thinks that the matter in point requires proof.' Now, though not from Missouri, I *do* think that the matter in point requires proof. And proof, Prof. Manly quite frankly admits, he has none. 'I know no other instance of Long Will with the meaning here suggested.'

In the absence of evidence to the contrary is it rash to assume that both A and B meant what they said?

*Will*-references in C Prof. Manly does not dispute: and it may be noted that we have again the reference to the height of the visionary:

Ich am...to long, leyf me, lowe for to stoupe. (C vi, 24.)

It is surely strange that B and C, whose additions, according to the separators are 'tangential' and off the point, should have developed in quite different parts of the poem the hint afforded by A. Or did A, B and C happen all to be tall men, and all fond of referring to their height?

'My name is Long Will,' says one author. We are told it is not. 'My name is Will<sup>2</sup>,' says another. We are told it is Francis. In each case we are entitled to ask for the evidence.

Whichever way that evidence be ultimately interpreted, it will not alter the fact that to Prof. Manly all students of *Piers Plowman* are under a debt second only to that which they owe to Prof. Skeat, and to M. Jusserand. It cannot be denied that he has deserved *laudari a laudato*, to be praised by Dr Bradley as having 'initiated a new stage in the progress of Langland criticism.' But Prof. Manly would be the last to claim, on this account, that his views should be accepted without careful scrutiny. This scrutiny he has from the first invited. What the ultimate verdict will be it is impossible, as yet, to say. Years

<sup>1</sup> *Mod. Phil.* vii, 1. 97, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare, *Sonnets* cxxxvi.

hence, when all the evidence has been sifted, it may be that Prof. Manly's view will be amply supported, and that it will be shown to be possible, or probable, if not certain, that the B and C revisers were not identical with the original author. But, at present, this view is but a theory, and rests for its support upon the following assumptions:

That the metre of B differs from that of A—a statement which, in the present condition of our texts, it is exceedingly difficult to verify: that the dialect of B differs from that of A—a statement in support of which the readings of a single line have, so far, been adduced, which readings an examination of the MSS. shows to be, in about half the instances, the exact reverse of what is stated: that A could not have associated Robert the Robber with Sloth in v, 242, although he has connected *Robert's men* with Sloth in Pro. 44-5; that he could not in v, 237 have associated 'wicked winning' with slackness in returning things borrowed, although in VII, 91-2 he has associated prompt return with 'true winning'; that he could not have allowed Sloth and Covetousness to overlap, although he has allowed every one of his other deadly sins to do so; that he could not have introduced an unnecessary character for the sake of the name in VII, 71, although he has indisputably done so in IV, 126-7; that B, who made Wrath envious cannot be the same as A, who makes Envy wrathful; that B did not understand that the feoffment covered the provinces of the Seven Sins, although he has, in point of fact, made this clearer than it was in A; that B could not in II, 21 have used *lemman* in the sense in which he certainly used it in XIV, 299; that when B says *segges in London* he means dogs anywhere.

R. W. CHAMBERS.

LONDON.

NOTE. The *Ayenbite* has been quoted as an authority on the Sins (pp. 19, 20) because it is convenient for reference. It is, of course, only a literal and most inaccurate version of the *Somme le Roy* of Friar Laurent. (See Varnhagen in *Englische Studien*, I, 379-423; II, 52-59.) The *Somme* has been in part printed by Evers (Erlangen, 1888), but Evers' text begins at a point subsequent to that under consideration. I have satisfied myself, however, from a comparison of the French MS. (Cotton, Cleopatra A. 5) that in the passages cited Dan Michel represents his original fairly: he is indeed more than usually accurate.

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# THE AUTHORSHIP OF *PIERS THE PLOWMAN*

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THE AUTHORSHIP OF 'PIERS  
THE PLOWMAN.'

## DISCUSSIONS.

### THE AUTHORSHIP OF 'PIERS THE PLOWMAN.'

ALL students of *Piers the Plowman*, however diverse may be their opinions on the questions treated in Mr Chambers's article in the January number of the *Review*, must, I think, be of one mind in cordially welcoming into their field an investigator of such admirable knowledge, sagacity, and fairness. I had resolved to write no more on the subject for the present, feeling that little substantial progress can be made until the text has been settled by scientific criticism; but as I am one of those whose conclusions have been so powerfully assailed by Mr Chambers, it seems to be incumbent on me to say how far I am prepared to acknowledge the force of his objections, and how far and for what reasons I remain at present of the same opinion as before.

In the first place, I must frankly admit that I was mistaken in asserting that the offences of Robert the Robber have no affinity with the sin of Sloth. It is now clear to me, thanks to Mr Chambers's excellent demonstration, that a mediaeval writer might, without any inappropriateness, have introduced the lament of the Robber as a sequel to the confession of Sloth. Although, as Mr Chambers acknowledges, Robert's offences in themselves come under the head of Covetousness, they are the result of habits of idleness, and it is his neglect to learn an honest trade that renders it impossible for him to make compensation to those whom he has injured. He does not actually fall into 'wanhope,' which is the recognised last and fatal stage in the progress of the slothful, but he is saved from it only by the recollection of the penitent thief, the standard example for the encouragement of those who are on the verge of despair. At the same time, it is worth remembering that in the B-text it is Covetousness, not Sloth, who 'wex into wanhope,' and would have hanged himself if he had not been 'reconforted' by Repentance. It is plain that Robert is meant to represent another and more desperate variety of the same deadly sin which the preceding penitent has confessed; but his character and utterances do not supply any clear grounds for deciding whether that sin was Covetousness or Sloth.

We may, however, find an answer to this question in the preceding lines (A v, 236—241). I fully grant that some kind of promise of restitution might fitly enough conclude the confession of Sloth. But

the promise that appears in these lines is not so worded as to favour the view that it was written for that purpose. Mr Chambers rightly insists that the proper meaning of 'win' is to gain by one's labour—to 'earn,' as Prof. Skeat renders it. For this very reason, the words 'al that I wikkedliche won' would more suitably relate to the results of the mercantile dishonesty to which Covetousness has pleaded guilty, than to those of such transgressions as in the B-text are laid to the charge of Sloth. The added words 'seththe I wit hade' point to a life spent in the deliberate pursuit of gain. It seems to me that 'wicked winning' is properly characteristic of Covetousness in the special form in which it manifests itself in the fraudulent tradesman, the usurer, or one who uses unjustly the opportunities for gain afforded by some regular calling. Although the 'Robert's man' is guilty of Covetousness as well as of Sloth, he belongs not to the tribe of Wynnere, but to that of Wastour.

I think, therefore, that while the lamentation of Robert, taken by itself, might, with equal appropriateness be placed as a pendant to the description of Covetousness or to that of Sloth, the entire passage A v, 236—259 would be improved in fitness if it were transferred to the former position. This was, as is well known, the opinion of C, who is at any rate a good witness with regard to the ideas of the fourteenth century, even if he be not, as some able scholars still believe, the original author himself. But the question is not whether C and certain modern people are right in thinking that a transposition would improve the poem, but whether it is likely that the present arrangement of the text is original. Are the reasons for the negative answer sufficiently weighty to justify us in setting aside the presumption that is rightly held to exist in favour of a traditional text against a mere conjecture? I think they are.

On the assumption that ll. 236—259 were intended to follow l. 235, we are met by a remarkable series of coincidences, which have to be regarded as purely accidental. First, these lines admittedly come in very awkwardly in their supposed original context; and we are to believe that it is by mere chance that when joined to line 145 the passage yields a continuous and satisfactory sense. Secondly, while we might feel only a mild surprise on observing that the poet had omitted to bring the confession of Covetousness to its needful conclusion in a promise of restitution, it is very odd that the deficiency should happen to be just the one which the transposition supplies. Thirdly, the promise made by Sloth happens to be expressed in language which, as I have shown, is unbecoming the character; and it so happens that if Covetousness and not Sloth were the speaker, this language would become perfectly accurate. I am unable to believe that these coincidences are accidental.

But I must not forget that one of the facts assumed in the preceding paragraph has been disputed. It has been said, and by scholars whose opinion I respect, that my proposed transposition does *not* result in a satisfactory sequence; that, in fact, the lines which I would transfer to the confession of Covetousness are inconsistent with those which they

are made to follow. Unfortunately I have failed to discover what my critics mean. Even assuming that the lines 241—2 are genuine, I can perceive no inconsistency. There is some awkwardness, no doubt, in making the penitent swear by the rood of Chester when he has just mentioned the rood of Bromholm. But this does not strike me as a serious difficulty, and it was assuredly not in order to evade it that I suggested that the two lines might be spurious. I think there are very good grounds for suspecting them. Let us consider the facts. The lines in question are as follows:

And with the residue and the remenaunt · bi the rode of Chester!  
I schal seche seynt Treuthe · er I seo [*or seche*] Rome.

In A vii, 93—4 *Piers the Plowman* says:

And with the residue and the remenaunt · bi the rode of Chestre!  
I wol worschupe therwith · Treuthe in my lyue.

Now surely this repetition is more than a little surprising. Mr Chambers suggests that it may have been designed to call attention to the contrast of character between the speakers in the two passages. This is more ingenious than satisfactory. My point is that while the words are perfectly appropriate where they occur in *Passus VII*—for the thrifty Piers knows that there is a ‘residue’ at his disposal when his debts are paid—they are quite unsuitable to the penitent (whether his name be Sloth or Covetousness) who in line 236 has just expressed uncertainty whether he will have enough even to compensate those whom he has wronged. If Mr Chambers’s conjecture as to the motive of the repetition were intrinsically likely, one might suppose that the poet had inserted the two lines in their earlier unfitting place by an afterthought. But, as is well known, it is a common trick of mediaeval scribes to interpolate matter taken from a different part of the poem which they are copying.

It might perhaps be contended that the poet may originally have written the lines 236—259 at the end of the confession of Covetousness, and afterwards, seeing that some parts of the passage would serve to supplement his scanty description of Sloth, have hastily removed them to their present place, without troubling himself to remedy the inconveniences resulting from the transposition. To those who are convinced that the three recensions of the poem come from one hand, this supposition might prove attractive; it would be exactly in accordance with their view of the author’s methods of composition. It will be time to discuss the merits of this solution when some one has seriously advocated it. The hypothesis of a scribal accident is at any rate simpler.

Although I still consider that the evidence for a dislocation of the text is conclusive, I must admit that Mr Chambers has done something to diminish the value of this result as an argument against the unity of authorship of the three forms of the poem. M. Jussérand found it possible to accept the hypothesis of transposition, and yet to maintain



that A, B, and C were the same person. This position will be more easily tenable now that it has been shown that the present arrangement of the text is one that the author might have been content to tolerate if he found it in the copy that lay before him when he came to revise his work. After fifteen years, a writer may well fail to remember so distinctly all the details of his plan as at once to detect any plausible alteration of it. The theory of unity of authorship does not necessarily imply, as some of its advocates suppose, that the elaboration of his early poem was the main preoccupation of William's life during thirty years. It may even be regarded as an argument on the conservative side that the second revision does attempt to remedy some of the faults caused by the dislocation, and that the final revision returns to the original order.

I now come to speak of the omission of the confession of Wrath. Mr Chambers maintains that if we consider the true design of the author, we shall see that this omission may well have been deliberate. He thinks that the comparative fulness or slightness of the treatment of the several sins is proportioned to the relative importance which the poet assigned to them as causes of the evils of his time. This explanation might serve to account for the little space given to Pride and Lechery as compared with Covetousness<sup>1</sup>. But the very meagre handling of Sloth, in contrast with the exuberance of imaginative detail in the description of Gluttony, does not seem equally favourable to Mr Chambers's view. I suspect that the poet troubled himself very little about the proportions of his work, but expatiated freely on those subjects that happened to stimulate his imagination, and dealt more or less perfunctorily with the rest. A careful re-examination of the *Passus*, in the light of Mr Chambers's remarks, has convinced me that whatever his design may have been, it was intended to be accomplished by showing all the seven sins in order brought to contrition by the preaching of Conscience. Accordingly, when I find that in the existing text Envy shows no penitence, while Wrath does not appear at all, and that both these defects are accounted for by the supposition either of a 'lost leaf,' or of the 'over-hipping' of a leaf by a scribe, I feel constrained to conclude that one of these suppositions is right. As I do not accept Prof. Manly's theory of a lost counterfoil after line 235, I see no reason for preferring either of them to the other.

We have now to consider in what way this result should influence our judgment on the question of the authorship of the B-revision. If the reviser had failed to perceive that the confession of Envy was incomplete, and that that of Wrath was missing, it would be hard indeed to resist the conclusion that he could not be the original author. That he has attempted to supply both gaps is, so far, a point in favour of his identity with the writer of A. On the other hand, although (as the passage about Gluttony shows) the A-poet was not incapable of being led astray from strict artistic propriety when he saw a chance of

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this is too much to concede. The destructive storm, in the poet's opinion, 'Was aperteliche for pruide' and for no *poyn*t elles.'

exercising his gift of humorous description, there is nothing in his work that would lead one to expect from him the curious irrelevance of B's confession of Wrath. I do not forget that a man's mental character may undergo a good deal of change in the course of fifteen years; but I find great difficulty in conceiving that this passage can have been written by the original author. A point not to be overlooked is that the omissions and alterations of the C-text considerably lessen the inappropriateness of the confession.

I have now dealt, to the best of my ability, with all those parts of Mr Chambers's paper which are directed against my own published views. It is not necessary or desirable that I should comment on those of his arguments to which a reply may be expected from Prof. Manly, though on several points I find myself not precisely agreeing with either side. On the general question of the authorship of *Piers the Plowman* I have throughout endeavoured to guard myself against making up my mind too definitely. In spite of certain difficulties, I think that the balance of probability is in favour of a plurality of authors; but this is only a provisional conclusion, and I prefer to abstain from controversy until textual criticism has provided a secure basis for argument.

I should like, however, to call attention to one piece of external evidence, the import of which does not seem to have been correctly apprehended; the testimony, namely, of John But. It is perfectly possible that this testimony is worthless: John But may have been merely guessing in the dark. But it is also possible that he knew what he was talking about; and so long as there is no proof of the contrary, it seems worth while to ascertain precisely what his testimony amounts to. Now, in the first place, I think the natural inference from his statement is that his lines were appended to a MS. containing only the poem of 'Do-wel': that is to say A ix—xii. He indicates that this poem was the last of the three works written by 'Will', the others being 'Piers the Plowman' and 'The Field of Folk' (*mechel puple*). When he had finished 'that which is here written,' Will died. If John But was correctly informed, the poems contained in the A-text, though they are obviously intended to form a continuous whole, must have been published in three instalments, comprising respectively Passus i—v, vi—viii, and ix—xii. As to the date at which John But wrote there is no certain evidence, except that it was before the deposition of Richard II. The prayer for those who love the king does not prove that the quarrel between the king and his nobles had already begun; but, on the other hand, the prayer might have been uttered by a writer of the Piers Plowman school (even if his opinions were identical with those of the author of *Mum, Sothsegger*) at any time before 1399. But if I am right in supposing that John But wrote when Will's three works still circulated separately, it will be more likely that he is to be placed near the beginning of the reign. It seems clear that he either did not know of the existence of the B and C texts, or regarded them as spurious.

Now, as I have said, the testimony of John But may quite possibly

be worthless; but it is the earliest piece of external evidence that we possess, and it will be well not to reject it without consideration. Of course, if internal evidence clearly demonstrates that A ix—xii cannot have been written by the author of A i—viii, there is an end of the matter; and I think it would be hardly reasonable to accept John But's authority in disproof of Will's authorship of B and C, while rejecting it where it confirms the traditional view. Prof. Manly's arguments for separate authorship of A ix—xii are not yet before the world; they may turn out to be irresistible. But from the mere inferiority of the later poem to its predecessor one can infer nothing. It has happened again and again that a writer has poured out his soul in a work of imagination, worthily embodying the fruit of years of meditation; and afterwards, when the original inspiration was exhausted, has endeavoured ineffectually to follow up his first great success. In A i—viii we have a great though not faultless work of art, with a clear design developed consistently from the germ that was in the writer's mind when he began. We feel that it reaches its predestined conclusion, and that any continuation would be a disfigurement. So, probably, William himself may have felt: and yet it would not be very strange if, after a while, the effect produced by his vision, and the consciousness of obscure thoughts within his own mind, prompted him to take up his pen again, to tell the story of a quest for the meaning of Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best, without the long preparation that had gone to the making of his one great work. The author of the poem of Do-wel has obviously no foreseen design; he gropes uncertainly after a solution which never comes in sight; but I do not see in this any reason why he may not be the same man who worked out with such admirable sureness the noble conception of the Vision.

I wish, before concluding this paper, to put in print for the first time a suggestion which has long been present to my mind, and which has been variously received by the scholars to whom I have communicated it privately. This suggestion is that the choice of the name Piers (the popular form of Peter) may have been prompted by the ejaculation 'Peter!' with which the Plowman first enters on the scene. It would of course be impossible to prove that this conjecture is correct, but it seems to me highly probable. If it could be established, it would involve the important consequence that William was indeed the creator of the ideal figure which for centuries influenced so powerfully the thought and life of England, and that he did not, as has often been supposed, merely introduce into literature a name and a conception that were already current among the people when he began to write.

HENRY BRADLEY.







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