

The Battle of Maldon

Anonymous

Cotton Otho A.xii, ff.57a-62b

brocen wurde.

Het þa hyssa hwæne hors forlætan,

feor afysan, and forð gangan,

hicgan to handum and to hige godum.

þa þæt Offan mæg ærest onfunde,

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þæt se eorl nolde yrhðo geþolian,

he let him þa of handon leofne fleogan

hafoc wið þæs holttes, and to þære hilde stop;

be þam man mihte oncnawan þæt se cniht nolde

wacian æt þam wige, þa he to wæpnum feng.

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Eac him wolde Eadric his ealdre gelæstan,

frean to gefeohte, ongan þa forð beran
 gar to guþe. He hæfde god geþanc
 þa hwile þe he mid handum healdan mihte
 bord and bradswurd; beot he gelæste 15
 þa he ætforan his frean feohtan sceolde.
 ða þær Byrhtnoð ongan beornas trymian,
 rad and rædde, rincum tæhte
 hu hi sceoldon standan and þone stede healdan,
 and bæd þæt hyra randas rihte heoldon 20
 fæste mid folman, and ne forhtedon na.
 þa he hæfde þæt folc fægere getrymmed,
 he lihte þa mid leodon þær him leofost wæs,
 þær he his heorðwerod holdost wiste.
 þa stod on stæðe, stiðlice clypode 25
 wicinga ar, wordum mælde,
 se on beot abead brimliþendra
 ærænde to þam eorle, þær he on ofre stod:
 "Me sendon to þe sæmen snelle,
 heton ðe secgan þæt þu most sendan raðe 30

beagas wið gebeorge; and eow betere is

þæt ge þisne garræs mid gafole forgyldon,

þon we swa hearde hilde dælon.

Ne þurfe we us spillan, gif ge spedap to þam;

we willað wið þam golde grið fæstnian. 35

Gyf þu þat gerædest, þe her ricost eart,

þæt þu þine leoda lysan wille,

syllan sæmannum on hyra sylfra dom

feoh wið freode, and niman frið æt us,

we willapmid þam sceattum us to scype gangan, 40

on flot feran, and eow friþes healdan."

Byrhtnoð mapelode, bord hafenode,

wand wacne æsc, wordum mælde,

yrre and anræd ageaf him andsware:

"Gehyrst þu, sælida, hwæt þis folc segeð? 45

Hi willað eow to gafole garas syllan,

ættrynne ord and ealde swurd,

þa heregeatu þe eow æt hilde ne deah.

Brimmanna boda, abeod eft ongean,

sege þinum leodum miccle laþre spell, 50
 þæt her stynt unforcuð eorl mid his werode,
 þe wile gealgean eþel þysne,
 æþelredes eard, ealdres mines,
 folc and foldan. Feallan sceolon
 hæþene æt hilde. To heanlic me þinceð 55
 þæt ge mid urum sceattum to scype gangon
 unbefohtene, nu ge þus feor hider
 on urne eard in becomon.
 Ne sceole ge swa softe sinc gegangan;
 us sceal ord and ecg ær geseman, 60
 grim guðplega, ær we gofol syllon."
 Het þa bord beran, beornas gangan,
 þæt hi on þam easteðe ealle stodon.
 Ne mihte þær for wætere werod to þam oðrum;
 þær com flowende flod æfter ebban, 65
 lucon lagustreamas. To lang hit him þuhte,
 hwænne hi togædere garas beron.
 Hi þær Pantan stream mid prasse bestodon,

Eastseaxena ord and se æschere.

Ne mihte hyra ænig oþrum derian, 70

buton hwa þurh flanes flyht fyl gename.

Se flod ut gewat; þa flotan stodon gearowe,

wicinga fela, wiges georne.

Het þa hæleða hleo healdan þa bricge

wigan wigheardne, se wæs haten Wulfstan, 75

cafnæ mid his cynne, þæt wæs Ceolan sunu,

þe ðone forman man mid his francan ofsceat

þe þær baldlicost on þa bricge stop.

þær stodon mid Wulfstane wigan unforhte,

ælfere and Maccus, modige twegen, 80

þa noldon æt þam forða fleam gewyrcan,

ac hi fæstlice wið ða fynd weredon,

þa hwile þe hi wæpna wealdan moston.

þa hi þæt ongeaton and georne gesawon

þæt hi þær bricgweardas bitere fundon, 85

ongunnon lytegian þa laðe gystas,

bædon þæt hi upgang agan moston,

ofer þone ford faran, feþan lædan.
 ða se eorl ongan for his ofermode
 alyfan landes to fela laþere ðeode. 90
 Ongan ceallian þa ofer cald wæter
 Byrhtelmes bearn (beornas gehlyston):
 "Nu eow is gerymed, gað ricene to us,
 guman to guþe; god ana wat
 hwa þære wælstowe wealdan mote." 95
 Wodon þa wælwulfas (for wætere ne murnon),
 wicinga werod, west ofer Pantan,
 ofer scir wæter scyldas wegon,
 lidmen to lande linde bæron.
 þær ongear gramum gearowe stodon 100
 Byrhtnoð mid beornum; he mid bordum het
 wyrcean þone wihagan, and þæt werod healdan
 fæste wið feondum. þa wæs feohte neh,
 tir æt getohte. Wæs seo tid cumen
 þæt þær fæge men feallan sceoldon. 105
 þær wearð hream ahafen, hremmas wundon,

earn æses georn; wæs on eorþan cyrm.
 Hi leton þa of folman feolhearde speru,
 gegrundene garas fleogan;
 bogan wæron bysige, bord ord onfeng. 110
 Biter wæs se beaduræs, beornas feollon
 on gehwæðere hand, hyssas lagon.
 Wund wearð Wulfmær, wælræste geceas,
 Byrhtnōdes mæg; he mid billum wearð,
 his swuster sunu, swiðe forheawen. 115
 þær wearð wicingum wiperlean agyfen.
 Gehyrde ic þæt Eadweard anne sloge
 swiðe mid his swurde, swenges ne wyrnde,
 þæt him æt fotum feoll fæge cempa;
 þæs him his ðeoden þanc gesæde, 120
 þam burþene, þa he byre hæfde.
 Swa stemnetton stiðhicgende
 hysas æt hilde, hogodon georne
 hwa þær mid orde ærost mihte
 on fægean men feorh gewinnan, 125

wigan mid wæpnum; wæl feol on eorðan.

Stodon stædefæste; stihte hi Byrhtnoð,

bæd þæt hyssa gehwylc hogode to wige

þe on Denon wolde dom gefeohtan.

Wod þa wiges heard, wæpen up ahof, 130

bord to gebeorge, and wið þæs beornes stop.

Eode swa anræd eorl to þam ceorle,

ægþer hyra oðrum yfeles hogode.

Sende ða se særinc suþerne gar,

þæt gewundod wearð wigena hlaford; 135

he sceaf þa mid ðam scylde, þæt se sceaft tobærst,

and þæt spere sprengde, þæt hit sprang ongean.

Gegremod wearð se guðrinc; he mid gare stang

wlancne wicing, þe him þa wunde forgeaf.

Frod wæs se fyrdrinc; he let his francan wadan 140

þurh ðæs hysses hals, hand wisode

þæt he on þam færsceaðan feorh geræhte.

ða he oþerne ofstlice sceat,

þæt seo byrne tobærst; he wæs on breostum wund

þurh ða hringlocan, him æt heortan stod 145
 ætterne ord. Se eorl wæs þe bliþra,
 hloh þa, modi man, sæde metode þanc
 ðæs dægweorces þe him drihten forgeaf.
 Forlet þa drenga sum daroð of handa,
 fleogan of folman, þæt se to forð gewat 150
 þurh ðone æþelan æþelredes þegen.
 Him be healfe stod hyse unweaxen,
 cniht on gecampe, se full caffice
 bræd of þam beorne blodigne gar,
 Wulfstanes bearn, Wulfmær se geonga, 155
 forlet forheardne faran eft ongean;
 ord in gewod, þæt se on eorþan læg
 þe his þeoden ær þearle geræhte.
 Eode þa gesyrwed secg to þam eorle;
 he wolde þæs beornes beagas gefecgan, 160
 reaf and hringas and gerenod swurd.
 þa Byrhtnoð bræd bill of sceðe,
 brad and bruneccg, and on þa byrnan sloh.

To raþe hine gelette lidmanna sum,
 þa he þæs eorles earm amyrd. 165
 Feoll þa to foldan fealohilte swurd;
 ne mihte he gehealdan heardne mece,
 wæpnes wealdan. þa gyt þæt word gecwæð
 har hilderinc, hyssas bylde,
 bæd gangan forð gode geferan; 170
 ne mihte þa on fotum leng fæste gestandan.
 He to heofenum wlat:
 "Gepancie þe, ðeoda waldend,
 ealra þæra wynta þe ic on worulde gebad.
 Nu ic ah, milde metod, mæste þearfe 175
 þæt þu minum gaste godes geunne,
 þæt min sawul to ðe siðian mote
 on þin geweald, þeoden engla,
 mid friþe ferian. Ic eom frymdi to þe
 þæt hi helsceaðan hynan ne moton." 180
 ða hine heowon hæðene scealcas
 and begen þa beornas þe him big stodon,

Ælfnōð and Wulmær begen lagon,
 ða onemn hyra frean feorh gesealdon.
 Hi bugon þa fram beaduwe þe þær beon noldon. 185
 þær wearð Oddan bearn ærest on fleame,
 Godric fram guþe, and þone godan forlet
 þe him mænigne oft mear gesealde;
 he gehleop þone eoh þe ahte his hlaford,
 on þam gerædum þe hit riht ne wæs, 190
 and his broðru mid him begen ærndon,
 Godwine and Godwig, guþe ne gymdon,
 ac wendon fram þam wige and þone wudu sohton,
 flugon on þæt fæsten and hyra feore burgon,
 and manna ma þonne hit ænig mæð wære, 195
 gyf hi þa gearnunga ealle gemundon
 þe he him to duguþe gedon hæfde.
 Swa him Offa on dæg ær asæde
 on þam meþelstede, þa he gemot hæfde,
 þæt þær modiglice manega spræcon 200
 þe eft æt þearfe þolian noldon.

þa wearð afeallen þæs folces ealdor,
 æþelredes eorl; ealle gesawon
 heorðgeneatas þæt hyra heorra læg.
 þa ðær wendon forð wlance þegenas, 205
 unearge men efston georne;
 hi woldon þa ealle oðer twega,
 lif forlætan oððe leofne gewrecan.
 Swa hi bylde forð bearn ælfrices,
 wiga wintrum geong, wordum mælde, 210
 ælfwine þa cwæð, he on ellen spræc:
 "Gemunan þa mæla þe we oft æt meodo spræcon,
 þonne we on bence beot ahofon,
 hæleð on healle, ymbe heard gewinn;
 nu mæg cunnian hwa cene sy. 215
 Ic wylle mine æþelo eallum gecyþan,
 þæt ic wæs on Myrcon miccles cynnes;
 wæs min ealda fæder Ealhelm haten,
 wis ealdorman, woruldgesælig.
 Ne sceolon me on þære þeode þegenas ætwitan 220

þæt ic of ðisse fyrde feran wille,
 eard gesecan, nu min ealdor ligeð
 forheawen æt hilde. Me is þæt hearma mæst;
 he wæs ægðer min mæg and min hlaford."
 þa he forð eode, fæhðe gemunde, 225
 þæt he mid orde anne geræhte
 flotan on þam folce, þæt se on foldan læg
 forwegen mid his wæpne. Ongan þa winas manian,
 frynd and geferan, þæt hi forð eodon.
 Offa gemælde, æscholt asceoc: 230
 "Hwæt þu, ælfwine, hafast ealle gemanode
 þegenas to þearfe, nu ure þeoden lið,
 eorl on eorðan. Us is eallum þearf
 þæt ure æghwylc oþerne bylde
 wigan to wige, þa hwile þe he wæpen mæge 235
 habban and healdan, heardne mece,
 gar and godswurd. Us Godric hæfð,
 earh Oddan bearn, ealle beswicene.
 Wende þæs formoni man, þa he on meare rad,

on wlanca þam wicge, þæt wære hit ure hlaforð; 240
 forþan wearð her on felda folc totwæmed,
 scyldburh tobrocen. Abreoðe his angin,
 þæt he her swa manigne man aflymde!"
 Leofsunu gemælde and his linde ahof,
 bord to gebeorge; he þam beorne oncwæð: 245
 "Ic þæt gehate, þæt ic heonon nelle
 fleon fotes trym, ac wille furðor gan,
 wrecan on gewinne minne winedrihten.
 Ne þurfon me embe Sturmere stedefæste hælæð
 wordum ætwitan, nu min wine gecranc, 250
 þæt ic hlafordleas ham siðie,
 wende fram wige, ac me sceal wæpen niman,
 ord and iren." He ful yrre wod,
 feaht fæstlice, fleam he forhogode.
 Dunnere þa cwæð, daroð acwehte, 255
 unorne ceorl, ofer eall clypode,
 bæd þæt beorna gehwylc Byrhtnoð wræce:
 "Ne mæg na wandian se þe wrecan þenceð

frean on folce, ne for feore murnan."

þa hi forð eodon, feores hi ne rohton; 260

ongunnon þa hiredmen heardlice feohtan,

grame garberend, and god bædon

þæt hi moston gewrecan hyra winedrihten

and on hyra feondum fyl gewyrcean.

Him se gysel ongan geornlice fylstan; 265

he wæs on Norðhymbron heardes cynnes,

Ecglafes bearn, him wæs æscferð nama.

He ne wandode na æt þam wigplegan,

ac he fysde forð flān genehe;

hwilon he on bord sceat, hwilon beorn tæsde, 270

æfre embe stunde he sealde sume wunde,

þa hwile ðe he wæpna wealdan moste.

þa gyt on orde stod Eadweard se langa,

gearo and geornful, gylpwordum spræc

þæt he nolde fleogan fotmæl landes, 275

ofer bæc bugan, þa his betera leg.

He bræc þone bordweall and wið þa beornas feaht,

oðþæt he his sincgyfan on þam sæmannum
wurðlice wrec, ær he on wæle læge.
Swa dyde æþeric, æþele gefera, 280
fus and forðgeorn, feaht eornoste.
Sibyrhtes broðor and swiðe mænig oþer
clufon cellod bord, cene hi weredon;
bærst bordes lærig, and seo byrne sang
gryreleoða sum. þa æt guðe sloh 285
Offa þone sælidan, þæt he on eorðan feoll,
and ðær Gaddes mæg grund gesohte.
Raðe wearð æt hilde Offa forheawen;
he hæfde ðeah geforþod þæt he his frean gehet,
swa he beotode ær wið his beahgifan 290
þæt hi sceoldon begen on burh ridan,
hale to hame, oððe on here crincgan,
on wælstowe wundum sweltan;
he læg ðegenlice ðeodne gehende.
ða wearð borda gebræc. Brimmen wodon, 295
guðe gegremode; gar oft þurhwod

fæges feorhhus. Forð þa eode Wistan,
 þurstones sunu, wið þas secgas feaht;
 he wæs on geþrange hyra þreora bana,
 ær him Wigelines bearn on þam wæle læge. 300

þær wæs stið gemot; stodon fæste
 wigan on gewinne, wigend cruncon,
 wundum werige. Wæl feol on eorþan.
 Oswold and Eadwold ealle hwile,
 begen þa gebroþru, beornas trymedon, 305
 hyra winemagas wordon bædon
 þæt hi þær æt ðearfe þolian sceoldon,
 unwaclice wæpna neotan.
 Byrhtwold maþelode bord hafenode
 (se wæs eald geneat), æsc acwehte; 310
 he ful baldlice beornas lærde:
 "Hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre,
 mod sceal þe mare, þe ure mægen lytlað.
 Her lið ure ealdor eall forheawen,
 god on greote. A mæg gnornian 315

se ðe nu fram þis wigplegan wendan þenceð.

Ic eom frod feores; fram ic ne wille,

ac ic me be healfe minum hlaforde,

be swa leofan men, licgan þence."

Swa hi æþelgares bearn ealle bylde,

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Godric to guþe. Oft he gar forlet,

wælspere windan on þa wicingas,

swa he on þam folce fyrmest eode,

heow and hynde, oðþæt he on hilde gecranc.

Næs þæt na se Godric þe ða guðe forbeah