

From "Introduction" in Skeat, W.W. and Sisam, K., eds.,
The Lay of Havelok the Dane. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1929

§ 6. *Le Lai d'Havelok*. This Anglo-French version likewise belongs to the twelfth century, and gives a similar story, with some variations. There are two MS. copies, of which one belongs to the collection made by Sir T. Phillipps, and the other is known as the Arundel MS. (or the Norfolk MS.), and is preserved in the Heralds' College, where it is marked E. D. N. no. 14. It was printed in Sir F. Madden's edition of *Havelok*, pp. 105-146; by M. Michel, Paris, 1833; in the Appendix to T. Wright's edition of *Gaimar*; and by Hardy and Martin (as above) i. 290 ff.² A brief sketch of its contents is here subjoined.

The Britons made a lay concerning King Havelok, who is surnamed Cuaran. His father was Gunter, King of the Danes. Arthur crossed the sea, and invaded Denmark. Gunter perished by the treason of Hodulf, who gained the kingdom, and held it of Arthur. Gunter had a fine castle, where his wife and son were guarded, being committed to the protection of Grim. The child was but seven years old; but ever as he slept, an odorous flame issued from his mouth. Hodulf sought to kill him, but Grim prepared a ship, wherein he placed the queen and the child, and furnished it with provisions, and set sail from Denmark. On their voyage they encountered pirates ('out-lagues'), who killed them all after a hard fight, excepting Grim, who was an acquaintance of theirs, and Grim's wife and

¹ The Introduction gives a full description of the MSS., of which the Durham copy is the earliest in script and language. The second volume contains a translation of *Gaimar* and *Le Lai d'Havelok*.

² The less accessible Phillipps MS. is the earlier. The Arundel MS., f. 148 b, has: 'Athelwold auoit vne fille Goldeburgh, et il regna vi anz. Haveloc esposa meisme cele Goldeburgh, et regna iij. anz.'

children. Havelok also was saved. They at last arrived at the haven, afterwards named 'Grimesbi' from Grim. Grim there resumed his old trade, a fisherman's, and a town grew up round his hut, which was called Grimsby. The child grew up, and waxed strong. One day Grim said to him, 'Son, you will never thrive as a fisherman; take your brothers with you, and seek service amongst the King's servants'. He was soon well apparelled, and repaired with his two foster-brothers to Nicole [Lincoln]. Now at that time there was a king named Alsi, who ruled over all Nicole and Lindesie;¹ but the country southward was governed by another king, named Ekenbright, who had married Alsi's sister Orewen. These two had one only daughter, named Argentille. Ekenbright, falling ill, committed Argentille to the care of Alsi, till she should be of age to be married to the strongest man that could be found. At Ekenbright's death, Alsi reigned over both countries, holding his court at Nicole. Havelok, on his arrival there, was employed to carry water and cut wood, and to perform all menial offices requiring great strength. He was named Cuaran, which means—in the British language—a scullion. Argentille soon arrived at marriageable age, and Alsi determined to marry her to Cuaran, which would sufficiently fulfil her father's wish—Cuaran being confessedly the strongest man in those parts. To this marriage he compelled her to consent, hoping thereby to disgrace her for ever. Havelok was unwilling that his wife should perceive the marvellous flame, but soon forgot this, and ere long fell asleep. Then had Argentille a strange vision—that a savage bear and some foxes attacked Cuaran, but dogs and boars defended him. A boar having killed the bear, the foxes cried for quarter from Cuaran, who commanded them to be bound. Then he would have put to sea, but the sea rose so high that he was terrified. Next she beheld two lions, at seeing which she was frightened, and she and Cuaran climbed a tree to avoid them; but the lions submitted themselves to him, and called him their lord. Then a great cry was raised, whereat she awoke, and beheld the miraculous flame. 'Sir,' she exclaimed, 'you burn!' But he reassured her, and attempted to give an ordinary explanation of her dream. The next day, however, she again told her dream to a chamberlain, her friend, who said that he well knew a holy hermit who could explain it. The hermit explained to Argentille that Cuaran must be of royal lineage. 'He will be king,' he said, 'and you a queen. Ask him concerning his parentage. Remember also to repair to his native place.' On being questioned, Cuaran replied that

¹ The northern part of Lincolnshire is called *Lindsey*.

he was born at Grimsby; that Grim was his father, and Saburc his mother. 'Then let us go to Grimsby,' she replied. Accompanied by his two foster-brothers, they came to Grimsby; but Grim and Saburc were both dead. They found there, however, a daughter of Grim's, named Kelloc, who had married a tradesman of that town. Up to this time Havelok had not known his true parentage, but Kelloc thought it was now time to tell him, and said: 'Your father was Gunter, the King of the Danes, whom Hodulf slew. Hodulf obtained the kingdom as a grant from Arthur. Grim fled with you, and saved your life; but your mother perished at sea. Your name is HAVELOK. My husband will convey you to Denmark, where you must inquire for a lord named "Sigar Pestal"; and take with you my two brothers.' So Kelloc's husband conveyed them to Denmark, and advised Havelok to go to Sigar and show himself and his wife, as then he would be asked who his wife is. They went to the city of the seneschal, the before-named Sigar, where they craved a night's lodging, and were courteously entertained. But as they retired to a lodging for the night, six men attacked them, who had been smitten with the beauty of Argentille. Havelok defended himself with an axe which he found, and slew five, whereupon the sixth fled. Havelok and his party fled away for refuge to a monastery, which was soon attacked by the townsmen who had heard of the combat. Havelok *mounted the tower*, and defended himself bravely, *casting down a huge stone on his enemies*.¹ The news soon reached the ears of Sigar, who hastened to see what the uproar was about. Beholding Havelok fixedly, he called to mind the form and appearance of Gunter, and asked Havelok of his parentage. Havelok replied that Grim had told him he was by birth a Dane, and that his mother perished at sea; and ended by briefly relating his subsequent adventures. Then Sigar asked him his name. 'My name is Havelok,' he said, 'and my other name is Cuaran.' Then the seneschal took him home, and determined to watch for the miraculous flame, which he soon perceived, and was assured that Havelok was the true heir. Therefore he gathered a great host of his friends, and sent for the horn which none but the true heir could sound, promising a ring to any one who could blow it. When all had failed, it was given to Havelok, who blew it loud and long, and was joyfully recognized and acknowledged to be the true King. Then with a great army he attacked Hodulf

¹ Hence the obvious origin of the legend of 'Havelok's stone', and a local tradition about Grim's casting down stones from the tower of Grimsby church. See § II.

the usurper, whom he slew with his own hand. Thus was Havelok made King of Denmark.

But after he had reigned four years, his wife incited him to return to England. With a great number of ships he sailed there, and arrived at Carleflure;¹ and sent messengers to Alsi, demanding the inheritance of Argentille. Alsi was indeed astonished at such a demand as coming from a scullion, and offered him battle. The hosts met at Theford,² and the battle endured till nightfall without a decisive result. But Argentille craftily advised her lord to support his dead men by stakes, to increase the apparent number of his army;³ and the next day Alsi, deceived by this device, treated for peace, and yielded up to his former ward all the land, from Holland⁴ to Gloucester. Alsi had been so sorely wounded that he lived but fifteen days longer. Thus was Havelok king over Lincoln and Lindsey, and reigned over them for twenty years. Such is the lay of Cuaran.

§ 7. **Robert Manning of Brunne.** It is convenient to consider next the translation of Peter Langtoft's *Chronicle* made by Robert Manning, of Brunne or Bourne in Lincolnshire, and completed in the year 1338. Manning is the well-known author of the poem entitled *Handlyng Synne*, written in 1303; and he was well acquainted with our poem, as he quotes it or imitates it at least twice; see notes to ll. 679, 819. The later portion of Manning's translation was printed at Oxford by T. Hearne in 1725, in 2 vols.; and the first part (British history) has since been edited, for the Master of the Rolls, by Dr. Furnivall. Now Langtoft mentions casually *Gountere le pere Havelok, de Danays Ray clamez*, i. e. 'Gunter, father of Havelok,

¹ Possibly Saltfleet, suggests Mr. Haigh. Such, at least, is the position required by the circumstances.

² In the Durham MS. it is Tiedfort, i. e. Tetford, not far from Horn-castle, in Lincolnshire.

³ This is an important parallel to a story told about Amleth (Hamlet) in the History by Saxo Grammaticus, bk. iv. 'He resorts to a device to increase the apparent number of his men. He puts stakes under some of the dead bodies of his comrades, to prop them up,' &c.—Gollancz, *Hamlet in Iceland*, p. xxviii.

⁴ A name given to the south-east part of Lincolnshire.

called King of the Danes', which Gunter he identifies with the Danish invader Godrum, defeated by Alfred in 878. See the edition by T. Wright (Rolls Series, i. 318). When Manning comes to this passage, he translates the French line by *Havelok fader he was, Gunter was his name*; where Hearne prints the former name as 'Hanelok'. Then follows the usual account, how Gunter (Godrum) made peace with Alfred, and submitted to be baptized, A.D. 878. After which we have the following interpolated passage, written by Manning on his own account. See ed. Hearne, i. 25:—

Bot I haf grete ferly þat I fynd no man,
 Þat has written in story how Havelok þis lond wan.
 Noiþer Gildas, no Bede, no Henry of Huntynton,
 No William of Malmesbiri, ne Pers of Bridlynton,
 Writes not in þer bokes of no kyng Athelwold,
 Ne Goldeburgh his douhtere, ne Havelok not of told,
 Whilk tyme þe were kynges, long or now late,
 Þei mak no menyng whan, no in what date.
 Bot þat þise *lowed men vpon English tellis*,
 Right story can me not ken, þe certeynte what spellis.
 Men sais in Lyncoln castelle ligges ʒit a stone,
 Þat Havelok kast wele forbi euerilkone.
 & ʒit þe chapelle standes þer he weddid his wife,
 Goldeburgh þe kynges douhter, *þat saw is ʒit rife*.
 & of Gryme a fisshere *men redes ʒit in ryme*,
 Þat he bigged Grymesby, Gryme þat ilk tyme.
 Of alle stories of honoure, þat I haf þorgh souht,
 I fynd þat no compiloure of him tellis ouht.
 Sen I fynd non redy þat tellis of Havelok kynde,
 Turne we to *þat story þat we writen fynde*.

There cannot exist the smallest doubt that by the 'Ryme' here mentioned, 'that lowed men vpon English tellis', the identical English romance, now before the reader, is referred to. We see also that, in 1338, the traditions respecting Havelok at Lincoln were so strongly preserved, as to point out various localities to which the story had affixed a name; and similar traditions connected with the legend, as we shall

find hereafter, existed also at Grimsby. The doubts expressed by the Chronicler, as to their authenticity, or the authority of the 'Ryme', are curious, but only of value so far as they prove that he was ignorant of the existence of a French romance on the subject, or of its reception in Gaimar's historical poem.

§ 8. **The Lambeth Interpolation.** On comparing the Lambeth MS. of Manning's translation, Sir F. Madden found that this passage had been omitted and replaced by a summary of the *Havelok* story, which is here printed after Madden's text. Obviously the interpolator had access to sources of which Manning knew nothing.

Forth wente Gounter & his folk al in to Denemark :
 Sone fel ther hym vpon a werre styth & stark,
 Thurgh a Breton kyng, th^t out of Ingeland cam,
 & asked (the) tribut of Denmark, th^t Arthur whylom nam.
 They wythseide hit schortly, and non wolde they ʒelde, 5
 But rather they wolde dereyne hit wyth bataill y the felde.
 Both partis on a day to feldē come they stronge :
 Desconfit were the Danes, Gounter his deth gan fonge.
 When he was ded they schepe brynge al his blod to schame ;
 But Gatferes daughter the kyng, *Eleyne* was hure name, 10
 Was kyng Gounters wyf, and had a child hem bytwene,
 Wyth wham scheo scapede vnethe, al to the se with tene.
 The child hym highte HAUELOK, th^t was his moder dere ;
 Scheo mette with Grym atte hauene, a wel god marinere. 14
 He hure knew & highte hure wel to helpe hure with his might,
 To brynge hure saf out of the lond wythinne th^t ilke night.
 When they come in myd se, a gret meschef gan falle :
 They metten wyth a gret schip, lade wyth outlawes all.
 Anon they fullen hem apon, & dide hem mikel peyne, 19
 So th^t wyth strengthe of their assaut ded was quene Eleyne.
 But ʒyt ascapede from hem Grym, wyth Havelok & other fyue,
 & atte the hauene of Grymesby, ther they gon aryue.
 Ther was brought forth child Havelok, wyth Grym & his fere,
 Right als hit hadde be ther owen, for other wyste men nere,
 Til he was mykel & mighti, & man of mykel cost, 25
 Th^t for his grete sustinaunce nedly serue he most.
 He tok leue of Grym & Seburc, as of his sire & dame,
 And askede ther blessinge curteysly, ther was he nought to blame.

Thenne drow he forth northward, to kynges court Edelsie, 29
 Th^t held fro Humber to Rotland the kyngdam of Lyndesye.
 Thys Edelsy of Breton kynde had Orewayn his sister bright
 Married to a noble kyng of Northfolk, Egelbright.
 Holly for his kyngdam he held in his hand
 Al the lond fro Colchestre right in til Holand.
 Thys Egelbright th^t was a Dane, & Orewayn the quene, 35
 Hadden gete on Argill, a doughter, hem bytwene.
 Sone then deyde Egelbright, and his wyf Orewayn,
 & therefore was kyng Edelsye bothe joyful & fayn.
 Anon their doughter & here Eyr, his nece dame Argill,
 & al the kyngdam he tok in hande, al at his owene will. 40
 Ther serued Hauelok as quistron, & was y-cald Coraunt,
 He was ful mykel & hardy, & strong as a Geaunt.
 He was bold curteys & fre, & fair & god of manere,
 So th^t alle folk hym louede th^t anewest hym were.
 But for couetise of desheraison of damysele Argill, 45
 & for a chere th^t the kyng sey scheo made Coraunt till,
 He dide hem arraye ful symplely, & wedde togydere bothe ;—
 For he ne rewarded desparagyng were manion ful wrothe.
 A while they dwelt after in court, in ful pore degre ; 49
 The schame & sorewe th^t Argill hadde, hit was a deol to se.
 Then seyde scheo til hure maister, ‘of whenne sire be ze ?
 Haue ze no kyn ne frendes at hom, in zoure contre ?
 Leuer were me lyue in pore lyf, wythoute schame & tene,
 Than in schame & sorewe lede the astat of quene.’
 Thenne wente they forth to Grymesby, al by his wyues red, 55
 & founde th^t Grym & his wyf weren bothe ded.
 But he fond ther on Aunger, Grymes cosyn hend,
 To wham th^t Grym & his wyf had teld word & ende,
 How th^t hit stod wyth Hauelok, in all manere degre,
 & they hit hym telde, & conseilled to drawe til his contre, 60
 Tasaye what grace he mighte fynde among his frendes there,
 & they wolde ordeyne for their schipyng, and al th^t hem nede
 were.
 When Aunger hadde y-schiped hem, they seilled forth ful swythe,
 Ful-but in-til Denemark, wyth weder fair & lithe.
 Ther fond he on sire Sykar, a man of gret pouste, 65
 Th^t hey styward somtyme was of al his fader fe.
 Ful fayn was he of his comyng, & god help hym bihight,
 To recouere his heritage of Edulf kyng & knyght.
 Sone asembled they gret folk of his sibmen & frendes ;
 Kyng Edulf gadered his power, & ageyn them wendes. 70
 Desconfyt was ther kyng Edulf & al his grete bataill,
 & so conquered Hauelok his heritage saunz faille.

Sone after he schep hym gret power in toward Ingelond,
 His wyues heritage to wynne ne wolde he nought wonde.
 Th^t herde the kyng of Lyndeseye, he was come on th^t cost, 75
 & schop to fighte wyth hym sone, & gadered hym gret host.
 But atte day of bataill Edelsy was desconfit,
 & after, by tretys, gaf Argentill hure heritage al quit.
 & for scheo was next of his blod, Hauelokes wyf so feyr,
 He gaf hure Lyndesey after his day, & made hure his Eyr. 80
 & atte last so byfel, th^t vnder Hauelokes schelde
 Al Northfolk & Lyndeseye holy of hym they helde.

MS. Lamb. 131, leaf 76.

complete manuscript, can the earlier history of the English poem be demonstrated.

§ 10. **Minor Versions.** Some dozen minor versions are discussed by Madden. One of these, from *Le Petit Bruit* by Rauf de Boun, a Lincolnshire man, bases on the English story, as the names show. Another from the prose *Brut d'Engleterre* is the subject of an interesting article by Brie in *Englische Studien*, vol. xxxv. 359 ff. Brie shows that this version, though it agrees in the main with the French story, borrows certain traits from the English, including the name Birkebeyn for Havelok's father. The rest are of little importance for our present purposes, as practically all represent the French, and not the English version of the story, in a more or less debased form.

§ 11. **Local traditions.** We find that Camden briefly alludes to the story in a contemptuous manner (p. 353; ed. 8vo, Lond. 1587); but Gervase Holles is far from being disposed to regard it as fabulous. 'In his MSS. collections for Lincolnshire' (says Sir F. Madden) 'preserved in MS. Harl. 6829, he thus speaks of the story we are examining¹:—

And it will not be amisse, to say something concerning y^o Common tradition of her first founder Grime, as y^o inhabitants (with a Catholique faith) name him. The tradition is thus. *Grime* (say they) a poore Fisherman (as he was launching into y^o Riuer for fish in his little boate vpon Humber) espyed not far from him another little boate, empty (as he might conceaue) which by y^o fauour of y^o wynde & tyde still approached nearer & nearer vnto him. He betakes him to his Oares, & meetes itt, wherein he founde onely a Childe wrapt in Swathing Clothes, purposely exposed (as it should seeme) to y^o pittylesse [rage] of y^o wilde & Wide Ocean. He, moued with pittie, takes itt home, & like a good foster-father carefully nourisht itt, & endeauoured to nourishe it in his owne occupation: but y^o childe contrarily was wholly deuoted to exercises of Actiuity, & when he began to write man, to Martiall sports, & at length by

¹ 'His account has been printed in the *Topographer*, V. i. p. 241, sq. 8vo, 1789. We follow' (says Sir F. Madden) 'the MS. itself, p. 1.'

his Signall Valour obteyned such renowne, y^t he marryed y^o King of England's daughter, & last of all founde who was his true Father, & that he was Sonne to y^o King of Denmarke; & for y^o Comicke close of all, that *Haueloke* (for such was his name) exceedingly aduanced & enriched his Foster-father Grime, who thus enriched, builded a fayre Towne neare the place where Hauelocke was founde, & named it Grimesby. Thus say some: others differ a little in y^o Circumstances, as namely, that Grime was not a Fisherman, but a Merchant, & that Hauelocke should be preferred to y^o King's Kitchin, & there liue a longe tyme as a Scullion: but however y^o Circumstances differ, they all agree in y^o consequence, as concerning y^o Towne's foundation, to which (sayth y^o Story) Hauelocke y^o Danish prince afterward graunted many immunityes. This is y^o famous Tradition concerning Grimsby w^{ch} learned Mr. Cambden gives so little credit to, that he thinks it onely *illis dignissima, qui anilibus fabulis noctem solent protrudere.*

And a little farther on he makes the remark, 'that Hauelocke did sometymes reside in Grimsby, may be gathered from a great blew Boundry-Stone, lying at y^o East end of Briggowgate, which retaines y^o name of *Hauelock's-Stone* to this day. Agayne y^o great Priuiledges & Immunityes, that this Towne hath in Denmarke aboue any other in England (as freedome from Toll, & y^o rest), may fairely induce a Beleife, that some preceding favour or good turne called on this remuneration. But lastly (which prooffe I take to be *instar omnium*) the Common Seale of y^o Towne, & that a most auncient one,' &c.