PARALLEL EXTRACTS
FROM
TWENTY-NINE MANUSCRIPTS
OF
Piers Plowman,
William Langland.
WITH COMMENTS, AND A PROPOSAL FOR THE SOCIETY'S THREE-TEXT EDITION OF THIS POEM.

BY THE
REV. WALTER W. SKEAT, M.A.,
LATE FELLOW OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND EDITOR OF LANCELOT OF THE LAIK.

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In order to do full justice to the poem known as Piers Plowman, the most valuable work in Early English Literature before Chaucer wrote, the Committee of the Early English Text Society have resolved to print an edition of the three best texts of the poem separately, the first of which, transcribed from the Vernon MS. at Oxford, is to appear in 1867. With the view of obtaining information as to the language, age, and type of every known MS. of the Poem, the Committee have, on Mr Furnivall's suggestion, resolved to print one and the same passage from every MS. which the goodwill of Librarians and owners of collections may place at their disposal, so that, by a collation of these extracts, the relative dialectal peculiarities, ages, and types of the MSS. themselves may be determined, and attention afterwards concentrated on those most likely to yield the most valuable results. The Committee, then, appeal to every one who has a MS. of this noble Poem under his control, to render them their assistance in carrying out the great work they have in hand. Only by the aid of men widely scattered over the land can the work be accomplished, and the Committee are sure that their appeal will not be left without response by any one who remembers how the old poem has called up before him the picture of his forefathers' life, and
shown him the earnestness with which they strove for Truth amidst the many corruptions of their time. Moreover, every reader of MSS. who knows of what value even this present collection of extracts is, will desire to add to the value it has for the makers of it, and for others as well as himself.

The first thing, then, that is asked, is, a copy from any and every MS. of Piers Plowman to which the reader may have access, of the lines 1508—1529 in Wright’s edition, 1856, vol. i. p. 47,—the passage corresponding to that from the numerous MSS. printed in the table at the end of this tract.

These lines have been chosen as a test-passage on account of their containing several verbal plurals, and in order to see whether any MSS. are consistent in the use of the Southern th, the Midland n or e, or the Northern s in the present plural indicative. The Rev. H. O. Coxo has most kindly made the extracts from the Oxford Bodleian MSS., and Mr W. Aldis Wright those from the Cambridge University Library and Trinity College; whilst the editor contributes those from Corpus and Caius Colleges, and from the Oxford colleges, and Mr Furnivall is responsible for the British Museum extracts, the dates of the MSS. of which have been fixed by Mr E. A. Bond, of the MS. department, whose valued help is here gratefully acknowledged. The Dublin extract was kindly furnished by Dr Lottner.

The texts have been stated to be of two types, distinguished by their readings of the first twenty lines,—those which, like Whitaker’s, make the dreamer to have slept “in a lande as he lay,” and those which, like Wright’s, make him to have rested “under a broode bank by a bournes syde;” but two texts of the same type (as ascertained by the foregoing test) are found to contain different versions of subsequent passages, while two of different types will coincide in such passages.

This test is, in fact, thus shown to be insufficient, and the editor of the proposed new edition has suggested the further test of observing the beginning of Passus VI. If the MS. is of the latter of the above types, the first line of this Passus is either

This were a wikkede wey
but who so hadde a gyde, &c.;
see Wright's ed. vol. i. p. 117; or else

The kyng and his knyghtes
to the kirke wente, &c.;

see Wright's ed., vol. i. p. 77; the difference being here caused simply by a variation in the method of numbering the Passus. If, however, the MS. be of the former or Whitaker type, we find here a long passage of great interest, which does not appear in the other MSS., commencing

Thus ich awaked, God wot!
wanne ich wonede on Cornhulle
Kytte and ich in a cote,
clothede as a lollere, &c.;

see Wright's ed., vol. ii. p. 514, in the notes.

But a further separation of the MSS. can easily be made, so as to distribute them not only into two distinct classes, but into three. A close and careful scrutiny of several MSS. shows that those which most resemble the one printed by Mr Wright can be separated into two kinds, which may very conveniently be named the Vernon and Crowley types. The first of these is best exemplified by the text of the Vernon MS. at Oxford, and it is remarkable as presenting the earliest or original version of the poem. It is easily recognized by observing that it omits many long passages, and, in particular, the one containing the story of the rats in the introductory Passus. It also contains very few Latin quotations, and does not extend much beyond ten Passus, though it is sometimes supplemented by a later text. Its readings are, in general, peculiarly good, and the sense more simple and distinct than in later versions. Examples of it are presented by the Vernon MS., by Harl. 875, Harl. 6041, Trinity II., MS. Digby 145, and the MS. in University College, Oxford. The Crowley type is adopted as a convenient name for the MSS. which resemble the text printed by Crowley in 1550, to which class the one printed by Mr Wright also belongs. The three texts, then, are (1) those of the Vernon type; (2) those of the Crowley type; and (3) those of the Whitaker type. It is proposed to publish one of each kind in the above order, so as to show the gradual development of the poem from its briefest into its most elaborate form. The
text printed by Whitaker is probably by no means the best of its class, and it is therefore very desirable to find out which is so. That chosen by Mr Wright is a very good one, and perhaps no better may be found, but great assistance will be afforded by any one who will undertake to make a careful comparison of a good MS. with the printed text, so as to make this point secure. It has been suggested that two of the texts might be exhibited in parallel columns, but the extraordinary differences in the arrangement of the subject-matter in them renders it doubtful if this is possible or expedient. The editor will, however, endeavour to give such copious references (in the two later texts at least) as will enable the reader to compare readily the various corresponding passages.

The most frequent fault in the MSS. is the omission of lines. It will therefore perhaps be sometimes found necessary to supplement the texts by readings from other MSS. of the same class. Examples of this sort of omission are easily pointed out in the texts already printed. Thus, after l. 338 (Wright, p. 11),

And right so, quod that raton,
reson me sheweth,
To bugge a belle of bras,
or of bright silver,
And knytten it on a coler
for oure commune profit,

the line in Whitaker,

And honge aboute þe cattys halse
þanne hure we mowe,

must of course be inserted in Wright, as being the very one on which the whole point of the story turns; whilst, on the other hand, Whitaker omits the line below (Wright, l. 357, p. 11),

Alle helden hem un-hardy
and hir counsell feble,

which is, of course, necessary. Putting for awhile the Vernon text aside, and examining only the two *printed* texts, it deserves to be carefully remarked that the variations between them are far more numerous and important than has been supposed, as may be seen
from the following analysis of pp. 1—14 of Wright’s text as compared with Whitaker. The numbers below refer to the lines in Wright’s text (2nd ed., 1856),

Thus, ll. 3, 4, 11, 12, 17—32, 67—74, 122—124, 132, 153, 154, 177—180, 189—192, 221, 222, 236—240, 242, 243, 408—413, and 439 stand differently in Whitaker.


On the other hand, Whitaker inserts 2 (half) lines after l. 28; a long passage, 60 (half) lines after l. 192, about Hophni and Phineas (cf. l. 6187, &c.); 2 (half) lines after l. 338; and 2 (half) lines after l. 429.

Nor is even this all; for the ll. 418—429 are transposed in Whitaker’s text so as to follow l. 276.

It is obviously very desirable to ascertain whether all the MSS. of each supposed type follow the same differences of arrangement, &c.; and whether any new MS. of value can be anywhere discovered. The present tract is put forth in the hope of obtaining further information on these points.

A few further points of difference between the two above types are here added, with references to Wright’s edition.

P. 1, ll. 1—20; p. 12, ll. 382—399 (which are not in Whitaker’s text); p. 54, ll. 1735—1760 (different in Whitaker); p. 80, l. 2569, where Whitaker has a passage, the counterpart of which is transferred by Wright to ll. 6218—6274; p. 88, l. 2846 (after which follows, in Whitaker’s text, a description of Luxury or Lecherie); p. 106, l. 3442 (after which follows, in Whitaker’s text, the passage given in Wright’s notes, vol. ii. p. 522); p. 142, ll. 4621—4658 (which stands very differently in Whitaker; see Wright’s notes, vol. ii. p. 526); p. 145, l. 4695 (after which Whitaker inserts a long and note-worthy passage; see Wright’s notes, vol. ii. p. 528); p. 161, ll. 5216—5432, where the texts greatly vary; p. 175, where besides several variations, the ll. 5675—5703 are quite lost in Whitaker, as is also the case with ll. 5987—6050. After the Latin quotation on p. 188
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l. 6112, Whitaker’s text very soon jumps to the beginning of Passus Undecimus, p. 202; but part of the intervening matter is found in Whitaker nevertheless, some of it (ll. 6213—6270) at a very much earlier place, and another fragment (ll. 6366—6548) at a much later, though the differences in the two texts are hereabouts far too numerous to be mentioned here. Continual variations occur, until the end of Passus XVI. is reached; but from this point to the end, pp. 348—448, the agreement of the two texts is remarkably close. Whitaker has, however, nothing corresponding to ll. 11572—11618, whilst he has additional lines between l. 11899 and 11900, and also the curious lines given below (where guns are mentioned) between l. 12621 and 12622; and it is partly because of the close coincidence of the texts in this latter part of the poem that these last lines constitute an excellent test-passage.

Special attention should be paid to the following remarkable passages: (1) p. 47, ll. 1508—1529, the passage now printed, useful as containing so many plural forms, and in which the first four (short) lines stand differently in Whitaker’s text;—(2) p. 262, ll. 8561—8576 (not in Whitaker) which is to fix in some measure the date of the poem:

``
Al Londone, I leve, 
liketh wel my wafres, 
And louren whan thei lakken hem. 
it is noght longe y-passed, 
There was a careful commune, 
whan no cart com to town 
With breed fro Stratforde; 
tho gonne beggeris wepe 
And werkmen were agast a litle, 
this wole be thought longe. 
In the date of oure Drihtne, 
in a drye Aprille, 
A thousand and thre hundred 
twies twenty and ten, ¹
``
¹ Wright’s text has At.
² MS. Laud. 581 has “twies threty and ten.”
My wafres there were gesene
whan Chichestre was maire;”

if, indeed, the passage is not a later interpolation, for in the last two lines the alliteration breaks down utterly;—(3) p. 77, Passus V., called in Whitaker Passus VI., where Wright omits the passage commencing “Thus ich awaked, God wot!” &c., in which the author is, or pretends to become, autobiographical;—(4) p. 54, ll. 1734—1760 (not in Whitaker), which alludes to Edward’s wars in Normandy; and (5) as a specimen of Whitaker’s text (it is not in Wright) the following passage containing an allusion to good, and which, as compared with Milton, Paradise Lost, book 6, l. 470, is a literary curiosity. It describes how Satan exhorts his fellows to resist Christ’s entry into hell.

“Ac rys up, Ragamoffyn,
and reche me alle þe barres
That Belial þe beel-eyre
beot with þy damme,
And ich shal lette þis lorde,
and hus light stoppe;
Ar we þorw bryghtnesse be blent,
barre we þe þates,
Cheke we and cheyne we,
and eche chync stoppe
þat no light leopen yn
at lover ne at loupe.
And þow, Astrot, hot out,
and have oute knaves,
Coltyng and al hus kynne,
our catel to save!
Brynston boilaunt,
brenning out casteþ hit
Al hot in here hevedes,
þat entren in ny þe walles!
Setteþ bowes of brake
a brasene gonne,
And shutep out shot ynowh
hus shultrom to blende!
Sette Mahon at the mangonel,
and mulle-stones prowep,
Whith crokes and with kalketrappes
a-cloye we hem eche one!
Lustep, quaep Lucifer,” &c.


It should also be noted where each MS. ends; if it contains the
“Creed” (of which MSS. are very scarce); and in what manner it is
divided into passus, as there seems to be much confusion in this
respect.

In order to assist in finding any required passage, the following
table of the various methods of divisions into passus is added, with
an index to the pages in Wright’s text, which will be found useful.

In some texts of the Crowley type, the “Introduction” is called
Passus I., while Pass. I. is called Pass. II., &c. Wright’s “introduction”
is also called Passus I. by Whitaker, and so on down to
P. IV., which he calls Passus V. After this, the divisions are as
follows:

Pass. VI., VII., VIII., (Whit.) are equivalent to Pass. V. (Wr.) p. 77.

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This is but a general guide; it should be added that Passus IX. (Whit.) really begins at l. 3798 (Wr.); that his P. III. of Do-wel begins at l. 6658, &c.; but this will not occasion much difficulty.

Since, however, the Passus are often not numbered in the MSS., or else, perhaps, so numbered as not to adhere to the same system throughout, the following list of first lines is added, as likely to be of great use to the reader of a MS. in finding his place. It will be noticed that those of the Vernon type divide the Passus V. of Wright's edition into two Passus, the division occurring so near to the end of that Passus as nearly to bisect Passus VIII. of Whitaker.

A. Passus of the Vernon MS.

Introd. In A somer seson. whon softe was þe sonne.
I. What þis Mountein be-Meneþ. and þis derke Dale.
II. Yit kneled I on my knees, and cried hire of grace.
III. Now is Meede þe Mayden I-nomen. and no mo of hem alle.
IV. Seseþ seide þe kyng. I Suffre yow no more.
V. þe kyng and his knihtes. to þe Churche wenten.
VI. Bote þer were fewe men so wys. þat couþe þe wei þider.
VII. þis weore a wikked wei. bote hose hedde a gide.
VIII. Treuþ herde telle her-of. And to Pers sende.

Incepit hic Dowel. Dobil. and Dopest.

I. (Do-weel) Sire Do-wel dwelleþ, quod wit. not a'day hennes.
II. (Do-weel) þenne hedde wit A wyf. was hoten dam studie.

B. Passus of the Crowley Type of MSS. (See Wright's Ed.)

Introd. In a somer seson. whan softe was the sonne.
I. What this montaigne bymeneth. and the merke dale.
II. Yet I courbed on my knees. and cried hire of grace.
III. Now is Mede the mayde. and na-mo of hem alle.
IV. Cesseth, seith the kyng. I suffre yow no longer.
V. The kyng and his knyghtes. to the kirke wente.
VI. This were a wikkede wy. but whose hadde a gye.
VII. Treuthe herde telle her. and to Piers he sente.

(Explicit visio willemi de petro plowman: et sequitur vita de dowell, Dobett et do-bestes secundum wytt et reson; several MSS.)

VIII. (or Introduction to Do-wel) Thus y-robed in russet. I romed aboute.

IX. (I. Do-wel) Sire Do-wel dwelleth, quod wit. noght a day hennes.

X. (II. Do-wel) Thanne hadde Wit a wif. was hote dame Studie.

XI. (III. Do-wel) Thanne Scripture scorned me. and a skile tolde.

XII. (IV. Do-wel) I am Ymaginatif, quod he. ydel was I nevere.

XIII. (V. Do-wel) And I awaked therwith. witless ner-hande.

XIV. (VI. Do-wel) I have but oon hool hater, quod Haukyn. I am the lasse to blame.

(Explicit de dowel, et incipit de dobet. Camb. MS. I.)

XV. (Introduction to Do-bet) Ac after my wakyng. it was wonder longe.

XVI. (I. Do-bet) Now faire falle yow, quod I tho. for youre faire shewyng.

XVII. (II. Do-bet) I am Spee, quod he, aspia. and spire after a knyght.


(Explicit Do-bet, et incipit Do-best.)

XIX. (Introduction to Do-best) Thus I awaked and wroot. what I hadde y-dreamed.

XX. (I. Do-best) Thanne as I wente by the wey. when I was thus awaked.

C. Pussus of the MS. printed by Whitaker.

(Hic Incipit Visio Willemi de Peirs Plouhman.)

I. In a some seyson. whan softe was þe sonne.

II. What þe montayne by-meneþ. and þe merke dale.

III. And þan þe ich knelede on my knees. and cryede to hure of grace.
IV. Now is Mede þe mayde, and no mo of hem alle.
V. Cesseþ, saide þe kyng. ich soffre 3ow no lenger.
VI. Thys, ich awaked, God wot. wanne ich wonden on Corn-
hulle.
VII. With þat ran; Repentaunce, and reherced hus teme.
VIII. De confessione Accidie. confessio Accidie (title).
   Tho cam Sleuthæ al by-slobered. wit to slymed eyen.
IX. Tho sayde Perkyn Plouhman. by Seynt Peter of Rome.
X. Trethe herde telle here-of, and to Peers [sente].
   (At the end—Hic explicit Visio Willi de Petro Plouhman.)

   (Incipit visio ejsudem Willi de Dowel.)
   I. Thus robæd in ruset. ich romede a-boute.
II. Thenne hadde wit a wif. was hote Dame Studie.
III. Alas eye, quath Elde. and Holynesse bope.
IV. Ac wel worth Poverte, for he may walke unrobbede.
V. Ich am Ymaginatif, quaþ he. ydel was ich nevere.
VI. And ich awakæd þer-with. wittles ner hænde.
VII. Alas that riche shal reve. and robbe mannæ soule.
   (At the end—Hic explicit Passus Septimus et Ultimus de Dowel.)

   (Incipit Passus Primus de Dobet.)
   I. Ther is no suche, ich seide. þat som tymæ ne bowweth.
II. Leve liberum arbitrium, quaþ ich. ich leyve as ich hope.
III. Ich am Spes, quaþ he. and spur after a knyght.
IV. Werie and weithode. wente ich forth after.
   (At the end—Hic explicit Passus Quartus et Ultimus de Dobet.)

   (Hic incipit Passus Primus de Dobest.)
   I. Thus ich awakede and wrot. what ich hadde dremed.
   II. And as ich wente by þe wayes. when ich was þus awakede.
   (At the end—Hic explicit Passus Secundus de Dobest. Explicit
   Peeres Plouheman.)

Any information with respect to MSS., any illustrative com-
ments, or any quotations which serve to illustrate the use of
the more difficult words which occur in any of the texts, will be very
thankfully received by the editor, the Rev. W. W. Skeat, 22,
Regent Street, Cambridge.
Note.—The order of extracts following is to some extent chronological, but it is impossible to be sure of the right order without comparing the original MSS. all together at once. Those of the Whitaker type, however, have been kept separate for convenience. The Caius MS. agrees very nearly with the early printed editions.
Meires and maistres
   and 3e that beoʒ mene
Bitwene þe kyng and þe Comuns
to kepe þe lawes
As to punisschen on pillories
   or on pynnyng stoles
Brewesters, Bakers,
   Bochers and Cookes
For þese be Men upon Molde
   þat most harm worchen
To þe pore people
   þat al schal a buggen
þei punisschen þe peple
   priueliche and ofte
And recheþ þorw Regatorie
   and Rentes hem buggeþ
With þat þe pore peple
Schulde puten in heore wombe
For toke þei on trewely
   þei tymbrad not so hye
Ne bouȝte none Borgages
   beo 3e certeyne.

Maires and Maceres
   þat menes ben bitwene
The kyng and þe comune
to kepe þe lawes
To punyshe on Pillories
   and pynnynges stoles
Brewesters and Baksters
   Bochers and Cokes
For þise are men on þis molde
   þat moost harm wercheþ
To þe poure peple
   þat perlcelme buggen
For þei enpoisone þe peple
   priueltich and ofte
Thei richen þorȝ regratrie
   and rentes hem biggen
Wip þat þe poure peple
   sholde putte in hire wombe
For toke þei on trewely
   þei tymbrad not so heizé
Ne bouȝte none burgages
   be ye ful certeyne.

Maires and maceris
   þat menes ben bitwene
Þe kyng and þe comune
   to kepe þe lawis
To punische on pilories
   and pynnyng stolos
Brewsteris and baksteris
   bocheris & cokis
For þise arn men of this molde
   þat most harm worshith
To þe pore peple
   þat perlcelme mele biggen
For þei poisoine þe peple
   priueltich and ofte
þei richen þurgh regratrie
   and rentis hem biggen
Wip þat þe pore peple
   sholde putte in her wombe
For toke þei on trewely
   þei tymbrid not so hiȝe
Ne boughten none burgagis
   bi þe ful certeyne.
Maires and maceres

that menes ben bitwene

The kyng and pe comune:

to kepe pe lawes

To punche on pilories:

and pynynge stoles

Brewsters and baksteris:

bocheris and cokes

For þise aren men of þis molde:

þat moste harme worchest

To þe pore peple:

þat parcelle mele biegen

For þei poysone þe peple:

þrueliche and ofte

þei richen þurgh regraterye:

and rentes hem biegen

Wip þat þe pore peple:

shulde putte in hire wombe

For toke þei on trewely:

þei tymbrid not so hige

Ne bouȝten none burgages:

bi þe fulle certeyne.

Maires and maceres

that menes ben bitwene

þe kyng þe þe comone

to kepe the lawes

To punyseþen on pillories

and pynynge stoles

Brewsteres and bakesteres

bocheres and cokes

For thise aren men on þis molde

þat moste harme worchest

To the pore peple

þat parcel mele biegen

For they poysen þe people

þrueliche and oft

þei rychen þorw regraterye

and rentes hem biegen

With þat þe pore peple

shulde put in here wombe

For toke þei on trewely

þei tymbred nouȝt so heiz

Ne bouȝten none burgages

be þe ful certeyne.
? ab. 1400. Vernon type.

3e meyres & maysters
pat beo ordeyned meenes
by-twene pe kyng & pe comyns
pe lawe for to kepe
to pynosche on pylorye
& on pynynge stoolis
Brewesteres & bakers
bochers & Cokes


Meires and maceris
that menys ben bytwen
the kyng and the commune.
to kepe the lawes
to punische on pilories
and pynynge stolys
brewsteris & bakesteris
bocheris and cokes
for these arm men of this mold.
that most harm worscheth
to the pore peple.
that parcell mele byggen
for thei poysen the peple
priuilych and ofte
thei richen thorngh regratere.
and rentis hym byggen
with that the pore peple.
shulde putte in her wombe
for tok thei on trewly
thei tymbred nat so hy3e
ne boughte none burgages.
by the ful certeyne.


Meyres & macers.
pat meene ben be-twen.
ye kyng & ye comouz
to kepe ye lawe.
To pounche on ye pyllary
& on pynynge stolys.
Brusterys & baxteryss
bucherys & kokys.
For yese arm men on erthe
yat most harm weryn.
To ye pover puple
yat parcel meel bye.
For yei poysyn ye puple
priuuly & ofty.
Yeir ychyn thorw regrateryz
& rentys hem byen.
with yat ye pore puple
Xuld put in her wombys.
For toke yei nouth vntreuly
yei xuld nout bygye so heymes.

[Part of the last four lines (two in the MS.) have been written.]
Meires & macerys
pei pat ben mene
bytwene þe kyng & his comowns
to kepe þe lawes
As to punysche on pylorie
and pynynge stoles
Breworris and bakers
bocheris and cokes
For þeþe arn men in þis world
þut moþ harm wurchen
to þe pore peple
þat perfel mel biggen
For þei poysene þe þe peple
þrietyl wol ofte
and richen þurw regratrie
& rentes hem biggen
Of þat þe pore peple
schuld putten in here wombes
For ne toke þei fo wrongwifly
þei tymbrid not so hie
Ne bouȝte none bargaynes
be þou wol certayn.

Meiris & maistris
hij þat ben mene
Betwyn þe king & þe comunes
to kepe þe lawes
As to punisfchen on pillories
& on pynynge stolis
Breweris & bakeres
bocheris & cokes
For þeþe arn men of þeþe molde
þat moþt harm werchip
To þe pore peple
þat perfel mel biggen
For þei poisons þe þe peple
þrietyl el ofte
And risen vp þorþ regratrie
& renlis hem biggen
Of þat þe pore peple
shulde putte in here wombe
For tok he on trowely
he tymbride not so heïe
Ne bouȝte none burgages
be þe wel certayn.

Meires & maystres
þat menes been bitwene
þe kyng & þe comunes
to kepe wel þe lawes
To punyschen on pyleries
& pynynge stolys
Breusteris & bakesters
bocheris & cokes
For þeþe arn men on þis molde
þat moost harm wurchen
To þe pore peple
þat perfelme biggen
For þei pynyschen þe þe peple
þrietyl & ofte
þei richen þorþ regratrie
& renlis hem biggen
wip þat þe pore regratrie
schulde putte in her wombe
For toke þei on truli
þei tymbriden not so hye
Ne bouȝte noon burgages
be þe ful certeyn.
Meyres and maystres
menes be bitwyne
The kyng & þe Comunes
to kepe well þe lawes
To punyshen on pyleries
& pynynge ftilis
broufeters & bakers
bocheris & cokis
For þese arn men on þis molde
pat moste harm worchen
To þe pore peple
pat perceallmele biggen
For þei punnyfchen þe peple
preylich & ofte
þei richen þoru3 regratere
& rentes hem biggen
With þat þe pore peple
shuld put in her wombe
For toke þei on truly
þei tymbred not fo hie
Ne boutte non burgages
be þe Full Certeyne.

Meyres with here Macerys
pat meenys been be-twene
þe kyng & þe Comonsys
to kepen wel þe lawys
& punysshyn vpon pylory
& on pynynge stolys
Boþe websteres & bakesterys
& bocheres & Cookys
For þo are men vpon moolda
pat most harm wirche
To þe pore peple
pat percemel-meel byggyyn
& poulyne þe peple
pryvylly & softe
þey richen þoru3 regratrye
& rentys hem byggyyn
witt þat þe pore peple
shold pe pytte in her wombe
For tooke þey on trewly
þey tymbred not so hyze
Ne bowhte no bargayn
be þe fulle serteyn.

Meyres and maystres /
hiȝ þat ben menene dwellyn
Betwene þe kyng and þe comyns /
to kepe þe lawes
As to ponyschen on pileries /
and on pynynge stolys
Brewers and bakers /
bochers and cokes
For þese arn mon of þise molde /
þat most harme worchip
To þe pore peple þat /
parcell mel biggeth
For þei poulyne þe peple /
privily well ofte
And rysen vpp þoru3 regratrye /
and rentis hem biggen
Of þat þe pore peple /
shuld put in here wombe
For took he but trewly /
he tymbered nat so hie
Ne boutte non bargages /
be þe wel certayn.
Mayers & masters
& thay that bene meane.
Betwene the kyng & the commen
to kepe the lawes
As to ponische on pylory
& on pynynge stoles
Brewars & bakars
bochar and cokis
For thay arn men on this molde
that most harme worchen
To the pore people
that parcelmale beggyn
For thay poyson the people
privlich well ofte
And rychen through regraterye
& rentes hem byen
Of that the pore people
shuld putt in her wombe
For toke they not vntrewly
they tymberid not so hye
Ne bowghte no burgages
be ye well certeyne.
3ut mede ṭat maide.
   ṭe meir sche bi-souȝte
Boþe schereus and sergauntȝ.
   and swiche as lawe kepen
To puniseche on pilarþies.
   and in penyng stoles
As bakers and brueres.
   bocheres and cokes
For þese men don most harm.
   to þe mene peple
Rechen þorw regratrye.
   and rentes hem biggen

For token þei trewelī.
   þei stieden nouȝt so hīȝe
And bouȝten hem no burgages.
   þe þe wel sure
þei haþ no pite on þe þore peple.
   þat parcelmele biggen
þaw þei take hem untidi þing.
   no tresoun þei hit holde
And þaw þei fulle nouȝt ful.
   þat for þe lawe is scleþ
þei griþen þer-fore as gretþ.
   as for þe gretþ truþe.

(There are yet 26 more long lines following these before reaching the line which in Wright's text succeeds "Be ye ful certeyne").
22. B. Mus. VI. Harl. 2376 (fol. 13, back), f ab. 1430. Whitaker.

3ut mede myldeýly:
   þe mayr hyre by-souȝt
Bøþ scherefis & seriauntes:
   & hem þat keþel lawes
Some punysscheþ op-on pilereyes:
   & on pynynge stoles
As bakers & breweris:
   bouchers & koukes
For þes men dop most harm:
   to þe comen peple
Ryecheþ þorow regratryye:
   & rentes hem byggges
With þat þe powre peple:
   scholdes put in here wombe
For hy touke so vntruly:
   hy tymbred nouþ so hyeþe
Some bouȝte burgages:
   be þe ful certaynyn
þo haueþ no pyte of þe peple:
   þat parcel mele mote biggen
þan hy takeþ hem vu-tydy þyng:
   hy hold it no treson
& þaw hy fylle nouȝt ful:
   þat for þe lawe ys seled
he grynþeþ þerfor as grete:
   as for þe riȝt truȝe.

23. Oxford IV. MS. Digby 102, fol. 3. (Wants beginning.)

Sut mede the mayre
   myldeliche sche by-souhte
Bote Shyreues and Seriauntþ
   and suche as keþel lawes
To puneschen vȝpen pylorieþ
   and uppon pynynge stoles
As bakeres and þærbocheres and cokes
For thyse men don most harm
   to the mene peple
Rychen thorw regrateryye
   and rentes hem biggeth
With that the pore peple
   sholdes putte in here wombes
For tok they on treweþly
   they tymbred nat so hewye
Ne bouhte none burghgages
   be þe ful certeynyn.


3ut mede myldeleþ
   þe mere ȝo bysouȝt
bøþ schereþes & seriaunþs
   & suche as keþel lawes
To punschen on pillories
   & on pynynge stoles
As bakers and breweris
   boucheres and cokes
For þes men dop most harme
   to þe mene peple
Richen þroþ regraterieþ
   and rentes hem biggen
With þat þe pore peple
   scholdes puten in here women
For toke þey on trewelíc
   þei tymbred noȝt so hewye
Noþer boþen burgages
   be þe ful certaynyn.

1 Sic.
And mede myldely
  þe meyre scho by-sowte
Bothe schereues and sargans
  and suche as kepè lawes
To punyschen on pylorys
  and on pynynystoles
As bakers and brewers
  bocheres and kokes
For þes men dop most harm
  to þe mene people
Rechen throw regraterye
  and rentes hem buggen
With þat þe poore people
  schold putten in here wombe
For tok þei on trewly
  þey tymbred nat so hye
Now þer bowten borgages
  be þe ful certayn
They have no pite on þe people
  þat percelmel mot buggen
þauh þei take hem on-tydyng þing
  no treson þei holden hit
And þauh þei Ful not ful
  þat for lawe is seled
he gryope þerfore as grete
  as for þe grete trewe.
Yet mede myldliely.
the mayre she be-sought
bothe sheyref and sergans.
and such that kepeth lawes
to punyshen on pylloryes.
& on pynyng stoles
As bakers and brewers.
Bochers and Cokes
for these are men on this mowilde
that moste harm woorkeeth
for they pey to the poore people
that persell meale bughe
for they poyson the people
prvely and ofte
They richen
thorugh regratry.
and rentis hem biggen
with that the pore puple.
shulde puten in her wombes
for toke they on
they tymbreden nought so hye
neyther boughten no
burgages.
be ye ful certeyne.

1 Illegible; but written over by a later hand.
2 Altered to all by a later hand.
3 ne in a later hand.
PARALLEL EXTRACTS
FROM
TWENTY-NINE MANUSCRIPTS
OF
PIERS PLOWMAN,
WITH COMMENTS, AND A PROPOSAL FOR THE SOCIETY'S THREE-TEXT EDITION OF THIS POEM.

BY THE
REV. WALTER W. SKEAT, M.A.,
LATE FELLOW OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND EDITOR OF LANCELOT OF THE LAIR

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