Herveth to me, gode men -
Wives, maydnes, and alle men -
Of a tale that ich you wile telle,
Wo so it wile here and therto dwelle.
The tale is of Havelok imaked:
Whil he was litel, he yede ful naked.
Havelok was a ful god gome -
He was ful god in everi trome;
He was the wicestem man at nede
That thurte riden on ani stede.
That ye mowen now yhere,
And the tal you mowen ylere,
At the biginnig of ure tale,
Fil me a cuppe of ful god ale;
And wile drinken, her I spelle,
That Crist us shilde alle fro helle.
Krist late us hevere so for to do
That we moten comen Him to;
And, witthat it mote ben so,
Benedicamus Domino!
Here I schal biginnen a rym;
Krist us yeve wel god fyn!
The rym is maked of Havelok -
A stalworthi man in a flok.
He was the stalwortheste man at nede
That may riden on ani stede.
It was a king bi are dawes,
That in his time were gode lawes
He dede maken and ful wel holden;
Hym lovede yung, him lovede holde -
Erl and barun, dreng and thayn,
Knict, bondeman, and swain,
Wydues, maydnes, prestes and clerkes,
And al for hise gode werkes.
He lovede God with al his micth,
And Holy Kirke, and soth ant rych.
Ricthwise men he lovede alle,
And overal made hem for to calle.
Wreieres and wroberes made he falle
And hated hem so man doth galle;
Utlawes and theves made he bynde,
Alle that he micte fynde,
And heye hengen on galwe-tre -
For hem ne yede gold ne fee!
In that time a man that bore
Wel fifty pund, I wot, or more,
Of red gold upon hiis bac,
In a male with or blac,
Ne funde he non that him misseyde,
Ne with ivele on hond leyde.
Thanne micthe chapmen fare
Thuruth Englond wit here ware,
And baldelike beye and sellen,
Overal ther he wilen dwellen -
In gode burwes and therfram
Ne funden he non that dede hem sham,
That he ne weren sone to sorwe brouth,
And pouere maked and browt to nouth.
Thanne was Engelond at hayse -
Michel was swich a king to preyse
That held so Englond in grith!
Kriost of hevene was him with -
He was Engelondes blome.
Was non so bold louerd to Rome
That durste upon his bringhe
Hunger ne here - wicke thinghe.
Hwan he fellede hise foos,
He made hem lurken and crepen in wros -
The hidden hem alle and helden hem stille,
And diden al his herte wille.
Ricth he lovede of alle thinge -
To wronge micht him noman bringe,
Ne for silver ne for gold,
So was he his soule hold.
To the faderles was he rath -
Wo so dede hem wrong or lath,
Were it clerch or were it knicth,
He dede hem sone to haven rich;
And wo dide widuen wrong,
Were he nevre knicth so strong,
That he ne made him sone kesten
In feteres and ful faste festen;
And wo so dide maydne shame
Of hire bodi or brouth in blame,
Bute it were bi hire wille,
He made hi m sone of limes spille.
He was the beste knith at nede
That hevere micthe ridden on stede,
Or wepne wagge or folc ut lede;
Of knith ne havede he nevere drede,
That he ne sprong forth so sparke of glede,
And lete him knawe of hise hand dede,
Hu he couthe with wepne spedde;
And other he refte him hors or wede,
Or made him sone handes sprede
And “Louerd, merci!” loude grede.
He was large and no wicth gnede.
Havede he non so god brede
Ne on his bord non so god shrede,
That he ne wolde thorwit fede