Pour that on fote yede,
Forte haven of Him the mede
That for us wolde on Rode blede -
Crist, that al kan wisse and rede
That evere woneth in any thede.
The king was hoten Athelwold.
Of word, of wepne, he was bold.
In Engeland was nevre knicth
That betere held the lond to ricth.
Of his bodi ne havede he eyr
Bute a mayden swithe fayr,
That was so yung that sho ne couthee
Gon on fote ne speke wit mouthe.
Than him tok an ivel strong,
That he wel wiste and underfong
That his deth was comen him on
And saide, “Crist, wat shal I don?
Louerd, wat shal me to rede?"
I wot ful wel ich have mi mede.
Hw shal now my douhter fare?
Of hire have ich michel kare;
Sho is mikel in my thouth -
Of meself is me rith nowt.
No selcouth is thou me be wo:
Sho ne can speke ne sho kan go.
Yif scho couthe on horse ride,
And a thousande men bi hire syde,
And sho were comen intil helde
And Engelond sho couthe welde,
And don hem of that hire were queme,
And hire bodi couthe yeme,
Ne wolde me nevere ivele like,
Ne though ich were in heveneriche.”
Quanne he havede this pleinte maked,
Therafter stronglike quaked.
He sende writes sone onon
After his erles evereichhon;
And after hise baruns, riche and poure,
Fro Rokesburw al into Dovere,
That he shulden comen swithe
Til him, that was ful unblithe,
To that stede ther he lay
In harde bondes nicth and day.
He was so faste wit yvel fest
That he ne mouthe haven no rest,
He ne mouthe no mete hete,
Ne he ne mouchte no lythe gete,
Ne non of his ivel that couthe the red -
Of him ne was nouth buten ded.
Alle that the writes herden
Sorful and sori til him ferden;
He wrungen hondes and wepen sore
And yerne preyden Cristes hore -
That He wolde turnen him
Ut of that yvel that was so grim.
Thanne he weren comen alle
Bifor the king into the halle,
At Winchestre ther he lay,
“Welcome,” he sayde, “be ye ay!
Ful michel thank kan I you
That ye aren comen to me now.”
Quanne he weren alle set,
And the king aveden igret,
He greten and gouloden and gouven hem ille,
And he bad hem alle been stille
And seyde that greting helpeth nouth,
“For al to dede am ich brouth.
Bute now ye sen that I shal deye,
Now ich wille you alle preye
Of mi douther, that shal be
Yure levedi after me,
Wo may yemen hire so longe,
Bothen hire an Engelonde,
Til that she be wman of helde
And that she mowe hir yemen and welde?”
He answereden and seyden anon,
Bi Crist and bi Seint Jon,
That th erl Godrigh of Cornwayle
Was trewe man wituten faile,
Wis man of red, wis man of dede,
And men haveden of him mikel drede -
“He may hire altherbest yeme,
Til that she mowe wel ben quene.”
The king was payed of that rede.
A wol fair cloth bringen he dede,
And thereon leyde the messebok,
The caliz, and the pateyn ok,
The corporaus, the messe-gere.
Theron he garte the erl swere
That he sholde yemen hire wel,
Withuten lac, wituten tel,
Til that she were twelf winter hold
And of speche were bold,
And that she couthe of curteysye,
Gon and spoken of lovedrurye,
And til that she loven muthe
Wom so hire to gode thoucte;
And that he shulde hire yeve
The beste man that micthe live -
The beste, fayreste, the strangest ok;