

KING OSWALD'S FEAST

THE king had laboured all an autumn day
For his folk's good and welfare of the kirk,
And now when eventide was well away,
And deepest mirk

Lay heavy on York town, he sat at meat, 5
With his great councillors round him and his kin,
And a blithe face was sat in every seat,
And far within

The hall was jubilant with banqueting,
The tankards foaming high as they could hold 10
With mead, the plates well-heaped, and everything
Was served with gold.

Then came to the king's side the doorkeeper,
And said: "The folk are thronging at the gate,
And flaunt their rags and many complaints prefer, 15
And through the grate

"I see that many are ill-clad and lean,
For fields are poor this year, and food hard-won."
And the good king made answer, "'Twere ill seen 20
And foully done,

"Were I to feast while many starve without;"
And he bade bear the most and best of all
To give the folk; and lo, they raised a shout
That shook the hall.

And now lean fare for those at board was set, 25
But came again the doorkeeper and cried:
The folk still hail thee, sir, nor will they yet
Be satisfied;