

The *Battle of Maldon*—a fragment. The Battle of Maldon is one of the two famous battle-pieces in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The subject of the other is the battle of Brunanburh. The poem on Brunanburh is found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and has been turned by Teunfson into modern English verse, unrimed, with alliteration preserved. The manuscript of the *Battle of Maldon* is not in existence, having been destroyed by fire in 1731. The Northmen had invaded England, and as it was one of the duties of an Anglo-Saxon ealdorman to gather forces to meet the invaders, the ealdorman of the East Saxons, Byrhtnoth, collected the English of the neighbourhood and gave battle to the foe on the banks of the little river Panta, now the Blackwater, near Maldon, in Essex. Byrhtnoth was killed; hence German scholars usually call this poem the *Death of Byrhtnoth*. The English author, presumably an eye-witness of the conflict, seems to have written the piece very soon after the engagement, as he does not appear to know who led the Northmen. From the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle we discover that the leader of the invading host was called Anlaf. The late Prof. Edward A. Freeman dwells on the significance of the *Battle of Maldon* in his *Growth of the English Constitution*, chap. I., p. 42.

Then Ælfwine said: "Never shall the thegns reproach me among the people for desiring to leave this host and to seek my native soil, now that my chief lies here, hacked to pieces in the strife: that is my deepest grief, for he was both my kinsman and my lord." . . . Offa spake, as he brandished his ashen shaft: "Ah! thou, Ælfwine, hast exhorted all the chiefs, as was necessary; now that our prince our lord lies low on the earth, there is need for us all that each of us exhort his fellow-warrior to the strife as long as he can hold or wield his weapon, his hard sword, his spear, his trusty blade." . . . Leofsunu spake: I vow I will not flee a footstep hence, but will go onward to avenge my dear master in the fray." . . . T. Dunnere spake, a man old in years, and bade every man revenge Byrhtnoth: "Let him not hesitate a moment who thinketh to avenge his lord on the people nor care for his life." . . . Byrhtwold spake as he raised his shield and brandished his spear; he was an old companion, and very boldly did he exhort the warriors: "The mind must be the more resolute, the heart the braver, the courage the greater, as our power lessens. Here lies our prince all cut to pieces, the good man lies in the dust; ever may he mourn who thinks of turning back from this war-play. I am old in years; I do not wish to go away; I resolve to lie by the side of my lord, by so dear a man."

XV.

Cynewulf. *Riddles*. Cynewulf is the greatest of Anglo-Saxon poets. His riddles, preserved in one of the two large collections of Anglo-Saxon verse, the Exeter Book, display the very soul of Old English life and thought. Although based on earlier riddles in Latin by several authors, they may be considered original; not only on expansion of theme, but also on account of a poetical quality which belongs to them alone.