

Then came a post from Calais town  
 And strange word did he bring.  
 That Amory de Valence holds  
*His* oath a slender thing,  
 And names the price that tempteth him  
 E'en to betray his king.

I ween it is a sorry act  
 To grasp a traitor's hand ;—  
 But there are other things as hard  
 For men to understand ;  
 And good and evil in this world  
 Are tied up in one band.  
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Unbar your gate, Sir Amory,  
 Let your portcullis down !  
 Within this bag the price is laid,—  
 It lacketh not a crown  
 Of the round sum you bargained for,  
 The price of Calais town.

Unbar the gate, Sir Amory !  
 The sea fog gathers chill,  
 It tarnishes our armour plate  
 It clings to blade and bill.  
 St. Denis !—is the knave distraught  
 To keep us waiting still ?

Sir Amory undid the gate  
 With cautious hand and slow,  
 A moment poised the heavy bag  
 Then it aside did throw ;  
 ' We'll count the tale at break of day '  
 He said, in accents low.

With that he steppéd on one side  
 As if to give us way ;  
 We heard a whistle, long and shrill,  
 I saw a glimmer, gray  
 And rough with point of pike and spear  
 That right before us lay.

' O welcome, welcome ! sons of France !  
 Right welcome are you here,  
 Although you thought to buy too cheap  
 A town we hold so dear !  
 Full many a league of sea we've crossed  
 To mend your Christmas cheer.

' A Manny to the rescue,—ho ! '  
 —Then did we know right well  
 That silver crowns no more availed,  
 They were as weak a spell  
 To buy the gates of Calais town  
 As pave a road from hell !

But steel may win where silver fails,  
 And 'tis the fairer way ;—  
 We told down drops of blood for gold  
 Until the east was gray ;  
 'Twixt inner wall and barbican  
 The tide of fight did sway.