

Battle of Maldon

Here must we hold so hearken to my counsel
Felled is our lord slain by foemen on the field
Now we must honor the oaths we made in mead-hall
Now we must shoulder the burden of his shield.

Great were his gifts of gold and noble gemstones
High were the halls where the heroes boasted so.
He was my lord so loathe am I to leave him
Vow to avenge him by vanquishing the foe !

For our hands shall be the harder and our will shall be the wiser
And our hearts shall be bolder though our strength must end
Come and follow me to glory so that when they tell the story
We shall not be forgotten in the halls of men.

I will not flee but farther will I follow
Boldly to battle with broadsword in my hand
More than my life is the love I bore for Bryhtnoth
Fierce will I fight now and so defend this land

Come I from kindred of honor and of courage
Ne'er shall they say that I nithing was at war
Stand with me steadfast staunch against the Vikings
Wield ye your weapons like warriors of yore.

For our hands shall be the harder and our will shall be the wiser
And our hearts shall be bolder though our strength must end
Come and follow me to glory so that when they tell the story
We shall not be forgotten in the halls of men.

We stand undaunted the last of the defenders
Stout-hearted men who can strike a might blow
We will encourage each other in the war-play
Let them advance now for we shall lay them low.

Death is our doom but let us die with honor
All that lives after is what the bards do say
Fight to be worthy of fame in the future
Let them remember the deeds we do today.

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January 1999

Notes: In the year 991, the Northmen went raiding down the coast of England, and were met in opposition by Bryhtnoth, whose lord was Aethelred. The Vikings demanded tribute, but Bryhtnoth offers them swords and spears. In the ensuing battle Bryhtnoth dies, and over his dead body, his thegns declaim why they intend to keep fighting, even though they realize their cause is now hopeless. From these declarations is the song crafted. It contains a most famous Anglo-Saxon couplet "Hige sceal the heardra, heorte the centre, mod sceal the mare, the ure maegen lytlath". The translation of which is the first part of the chorus.