

BEOWULF: AN ANGLO-SAXON EPIC POEM

J. Lesslie Hall

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BEOWULF
**AN ANGLO-
SAXON EPIC
POEM**

*TRANSLATED
FROM THE HEYNE-SOCIN
TEXT*

BY

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TO
My Wife

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PREFACE.

THE present work is a modest effort to reproduce approximately, in modern measures, the venerable epic, Beowulf. *Approximately*, I repeat; for a very close reproduction of Anglo-Saxon verse would, to a large extent, be prose to a modern ear.

The Heyne-Socin text and glossary have been closely followed. Occasionally a deviation has been made, but always for what seemed good and sufficient reason. The translator does not aim to be an editor. Once in a while, however, he has added a conjecture of his own to the emendations quoted from the criticisms of other students of the poem.

This work is addressed to two classes of readers. From both of these alike the translator begs sympathy and co-operation. The Anglo-Saxon scholar he hopes to please by adhering faithfully to the original. The student of English literature he aims to interest by giving him, in modern garb, the most ancient epic of our race. This is a bold and venturesome undertaking; and yet there must be some students of the Teutonic past

willing to follow even a daring guide, if they may read in modern phrases of the sorrows of Hrothgar, of the prowess of Beowulf, and of the feelings that stirred the hearts of our forefathers in their primeval homes.

In order to please the larger class of readers, a regular cadence has been used, a measure which, while retaining the essential characteristics of the original, permits the reader to see ahead of him in reading.

Perhaps every Anglo-Saxon scholar has his own theory as to how Beowulf should be translated. Some have given us prose versions of what we believe to be a great poem. Is it any reflection on our honored Kemble and Arnold to say that their translations fail to show a layman that Beowulf is justly called our first *epic*? Of those translators who have used verse, several have written from what would seem a mistaken point of view. Is it proper, for instance, that the grave and solemn speeches of Beowulf and Hrothgar be put in ballad measures, tripping lightly and airily along? Or, again, is it fitting that the rough martial music of Anglo-Saxon verse be interpreted to us in the smooth measures of

modern blank verse? Do we hear what has been beautifully called “the clanging tread of a warrior in mail”?

Of all English translations of Beowulf, that of Professor Garnett alone gives any adequate idea of the chief characteristics of this great Teutonic epic.

The measure used in the present translation is believed to be as near a reproduction of the original as modern English affords. The cadences closely resemble those used by Browning in some of his most striking poems. The four stresses of the Anglo-Saxon verse are retained, and as much thesis and anacrusis is allowed as is consistent with a regular cadence. Alliteration has been used to a large extent; but it was thought that modern ears would hardly tolerate it on every line. End-rhyme has been used occasionally; internal rhyme, sporadically. Both have some warrant in Anglo-Saxon poetry. (For end-rhyme, see [1 53](#), [1 54](#); for internal rhyme, [2 21](#), [6 40](#).)

What Gummere¹ calls the “rime-giver” has been studiously kept; viz., the first accented syllable in the second half-verse always

carries the alliteration; and the last accented syllable alliterates only sporadically. Alternate alliteration is occasionally used as in the original. (See [7 61](#), [8 5](#).)

No two accented syllables have been brought together, except occasionally after a cæsural pause. (See [2 19](#) and [12 1](#).) Or, scientifically speaking, Sievers's C type has been avoided as not consonant with the plan of translation. Several of his types, however, constantly occur; *e.g.* A and a variant (/ x | / x) (/ x x | / x); B and a variant (x / | x /) (x x / | x /); a variant of D (/ x | / x x); E (/ x x | /). Anacrusis gives further variety to the types used in the translation.

The parallelisms of the original have been faithfully preserved. (*E.g.*, [1 16](#) and [1 17](#): "Lord" and "Wielder of Glory"; [1 30](#), [1 31](#), [1 32](#); [2 12](#) and [2 13](#); [2 27](#) and [2 28](#); [3 5](#) and [3 6](#).) Occasionally, some loss has been sustained; but, on the other hand, a gain has here and there been made.

The effort has been made to give a decided flavor of archaism to the translation. All words not in keeping with the spirit of the poem have been avoided. Again, though many

archaic words have been used, there are none, it is believed, which are not found in standard modern poetry.

With these preliminary remarks, it will not be amiss to give an outline of the story of the poem.

THE STORY.

Hrothgar, king of the Danes, or Scyldings, builds a great mead-hall, or palace, in which he hopes to feast his liegemen and to give them presents. The joy of king and retainers is, however, of short duration. Grendel, the monster, is seized with hateful jealousy. He cannot brook the sounds of joyance that reach him down in his fen-dwelling near the hall. Oft and anon he goes to the joyous building, bent on direful mischief. Thane after thane is ruthlessly carried off and devoured, while no one is found strong enough and bold enough to cope with the monster. For

*twelve years he persecutes
Hrothgar and his vassals.*

*Over sea, a day's voyage off,
Beowulf, of the Geats, nephew of
Higelac, king of the Geats, hears
of Grendel's doings and of
Hrothgar's misery. He resolves
to crush the fell monster and
relieve the aged king. With
fourteen chosen companions, he
sets sail for Dane-land. Reaching
that country, he soon persuades
Hrothgar of his ability to help
him. The hours that elapse
before night are spent in beer-
drinking and conversation.
When Hrothgar's bedtime comes
he leaves the hall in charge of
Beowulf, telling him that never
before has he given to another
the absolute wardship of his*

*palace. All retire to rest,
Beowulf, as it were, sleeping
upon his arms.*

*Grendel comes, the great
march-stepper, bearing God's
anger. He seizes and kills one of
the sleeping warriors. Then he
advances towards Beowulf. A
fierce and desperate hand-to-
hand struggle ensues. No arms
are used, both combatants
trusting to strength and hand-
grip. Beowulf tears Grendel's
shoulder from its socket, and the
monster retreats to his den,
howling and yelling with agony
and fury. The wound is fatal.*

*The next morning, at early
dawn, warriors in numbers flock
to the hall Heorot, to hear the*

news. Joy is boundless. Glee runs high. Hrothgar and his retainers are lavish of gratitude and of gifts.

Grendel's mother, however, comes the next night to avenge his death. She is furious and raging. While Beowulf is sleeping in a room somewhat apart from the quarters of the other warriors, she seizes one of Hrothgar's favorite counsellors, and carries him off and devours him. Beowulf is called.

Determined to leave Heorot entirely purified, he arms himself, and goes down to look for the female monster. After traveling through the waters many hours, he meets her near the sea-bottom. She drags him to

her den. There he sees Grendel lying dead. After a desperate and almost fatal struggle with the woman, he slays her, and swims upward in triumph, taking with him Grendel's head.

Joy is renewed at Heorot. Congratulations crowd upon the victor. Hrothgar literally pours treasures into the lap of Beowulf; and it is agreed among the vassals of the king that Beowulf will be their next liegeland.

Beowulf leaves Dane-land. Hrothgar weeps and laments at his departure.

When the hero arrives in his own land, Higelac treats him as

a distinguished guest. He is the hero of the hour.

Beowulf subsequently becomes king of his own people, the Geats. After he has been ruling for fifty years, his own neighborhood is wofully harried by a fire-spewing dragon. Beowulf determines to kill him. In the ensuing struggle both Beowulf and the dragon are slain. The grief of the Geats is inexpressible. They determine, however, to leave nothing undone to honor the memory of their lord. A great funeral-pyre is built, and his body is burnt. Then a memorial-barrow is made, visible from a great distance, that sailors afar may be constantly reminded of the

prowess of the national hero of Geatland.

The poem closes with a glowing tribute to his bravery, his gentleness, his goodness of heart, and his generosity.

It is the devout desire of this translator to hasten the day when the story of Beowulf shall be as familiar to English-speaking peoples as that of the Iliad. Beowulf is our first great epic. It is an epitomized history of the life of the Teutonic races. It brings vividly before us our forefathers of pre-Alfredian eras, in their love of war, of sea, and of adventure.

My special thanks are due to Professors Francis A. March and James A. Harrison, for advice, sympathy, and assistance.

J.L. HALL.

[1] Handbook of Poetics, page 175, 1st edition.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES.

B. = Bugge. C. = Cosijn. Gr. = Grein. Grdvtg.
= Grundtvig. H. = Heyne. H. and S. = Harrison
and Sharp. H.-So. = Heyne-Socin. K.= Kemble.
Kl. = Kluge. M.= Müllenhoff. R. = Rieger. S. =
Sievers. Sw. = Sweet. t.B. = ten Brink. Th. =
Thorpe. W. = Wülcker.

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GLOSSARY OF PROPER NAMES.

[The figures refer to the divisions of the poem in which the respective names occur. The large figures refer to fitts, the small, to lines in the fitts.]

Ælfhere.—A kinsman of Wiglaf.—[36 3](#).

Æschere.—Confidential friend of King Hrothgar. Elder brother of Yrmenlaf. Killed by Grendel.—[21 3](#); [30 89](#).

Beanstan.—Father of Breca.—[9 26](#).

Beowulf.—Son of Scyld, the founder of the dynasty of Scyldings. Father of Healfdene, and grandfather of Hrothgar.—[1 18](#); [2 1](#).

Beowulf.—The hero of the poem. Sprung from the stock of Geats, son of Ecgtheow. Brought up by his maternal grandfather Hrethel, and figuring in manhood as a devoted liegeman of his uncle Higelac. A hero from his youth. Has the strength of thirty men. Engages in a swimming-match with Breca. Goes to the

help of Hrothgar against the monster Grendel. Vanquishes Grendel and his mother.

Afterwards becomes king of the Geats. Late in life attempts to kill a fire-spewing dragon, and is slain. Is buried with great honors. His memorial mound.—[6 26](#); [7 2](#); [7 9](#); [9 3](#); [9 8](#); [12 28](#); [12 43](#); [23 1](#), etc.

Breca.—Beowulf's opponent in the famous swimming-match.—[9 8](#); [9 19](#); [9 21](#); [9 22](#).

Brondings.—A people ruled by Breca.—[9 23](#).

Brosinga mene.—A famous collar once owned by the Brosings.—[19 7](#).

Cain.—Progenitor of Grendel and other monsters.—[2 56](#); [20 11](#).

Dæghrefn.—A warrior of the Hugs, killed by Beowulf.—[35 40](#).

Danes.—Subjects of Scyld and his descendants, and hence often called Scyldings. Other names for them are Victory-Scyldings, Honor-Scyldings, Armor-Danes, Bright-Danes, East-Danes, West-Danes, North-Danes, South-Danes, Ingwins, Hrethmen.—[1 1](#); [2 1](#); [3 2](#); [5 14](#); [7 1](#), etc.

Ecglaf.—Father of Unferth, who taunts Beowulf.—[9 1](#).

Ecgtheow.—Father of Beowulf, the hero of the poem. A widely-known Wægmunding warrior. Marries Hrethel's daughter. After slaying Heatholaf, a Wylfing, he flees his country.—[7 3](#); [5 6](#); [8 4](#).

Ecgwela.—A king of the Danes before Scyld.—[25 60](#).

Elan.—Sister of Hrothgar, and probably wife of Ongentheow, king of the Swedes.—[2 10](#).

Eagle Cape.—A promontory in Geat-land, under which took place Beowulf's last encounter.—[41 87](#).

Eadgils.—Son of Ohthere and brother of Eanmund.—[34 2](#).

Eanmund.—Son of Ohthere and brother of Eadgils. The reference to these brothers is vague, and variously understood. Heyne supposes as follows: Raising a revolt against their father, they are obliged to leave Sweden. They go to the land of the Geats; with what

intention, is not known, but probably to conquer and plunder. The Geatish king, Heardred, is slain by one of the brothers, probably Eanmund.—[36 10](#); [31 54](#) to [31 60](#); [33 66](#) to [34 6](#).

Eofor.—A Geatish hero who slays Ongentheow in war, and is rewarded by Hygelac with the hand of his only daughter.—[41 18](#); [41 48](#).

Eormenric.—A Gothic king, from whom Hama took away the famous Broisinga mene.—[19 9](#).

Eomær.—Son of Offa and Thrytho, king and queen of the Angles.—[28 69](#).

Finn.—King of the North-Frisians and the Jutes. Marries Hildeburg. At his court takes place the horrible slaughter in which the Danish general, Hnæf, fell. Later on, Finn himself is slain by Danish warriors.—[17 18](#); [17 30](#); [17 44](#); [18 4](#); [18 23](#).

Fin-land.—The country to which Beowulf was driven by the currents in his swimming-match.—[10 22](#).

Fitela.—Son and nephew of King Sigemund, whose praises are sung in XIV.—[14 42](#); [14 53](#).

Folcwalda.—Father of Finn.—[17 38](#).

Franks.—Introduced occasionally in referring to the death of Higelac.—[19 19](#); [40 21](#); [40 24](#).

Frisians.—A part of them are ruled by Finn. Some of them were engaged in the struggle in which Higelac was slain.—[17 20](#); [17 42](#); [17 52](#); [40 21](#).

Freaware.—Daughter of King Hrothgar. Married to Ingeld, a Heathobard prince.—[29 60](#); [30 32](#).

Froda.—King of the Heathobards, and father of Ingeld.—[29 62](#).

Garmund.—Father of Offa.—[28 71](#).

Geats, Geatmen.—The race to which the hero of the poem belongs. Also called Weder-Geats, or Weders, War-Geats, Sea-Geats. They are ruled by Hrethel, Hæthcyn, Higelac, and Beowulf.—[4 7](#); [7 4](#); [10 45](#); [11 8](#); [27 14](#); [28 8](#).

Gepids.—Named in connection with the Danes and Swedes.—[35 34](#).

Grendel.—A monster of the race of Cain. Dwells in the fens and moors. Is furiously envious when he hears sounds of joy in Hrothgar's palace. Causes the king untold agony for years. Is finally conquered by Beowulf, and dies of his wound. His hand and arm are hung up in Hrothgar's hall Heorot. His head is cut off by Beowulf when he goes down to fight with Grendel's mother.—[2 50](#); [3 1](#); [3 13](#); [8 19](#); [11 17](#); [12 2](#); [13 27](#); [15 3](#).

Guthlaf.—A Dane of Hnæf's party.—[18 24](#).

Half-Danes.—Branch of the Danes to which Hnæf belonged.—[17 19](#).

Halga.—Surnamed the Good. Younger brother of Hrothgar.—[2 9](#).

Hama.—Takes the Brosinga mene from Eormenric.—[19 7](#).

Hæreth.—Father of Higelac's queen, Hygd.—[28 39](#); [29 18](#).

Hæthcyn.—Son of Hrethel and brother of Higelac. Kills his brother Herebeald accidentally. Is slain at Ravenswood, fighting against Ongentheow.—[34 43](#); [35 23](#); [40 32](#).

Helmings.—The race to which Queen Wealhtheow belonged.—[10 63](#).

Heming.—A kinsman of Garmund, perhaps nephew.—[28 54](#); [28 70](#).

Hengest.—A Danish leader. Takes command on the fall of Hnæf.—[17 33](#); [17 41](#).

Herebeald.—Eldest son of Hrethel, the Geatish king, and brother of Higelac. Killed by his younger brother Hæthcyn.—[34 43](#); [34 47](#).

Heremod.—A Danish king of a dynasty before the Scylding line. Was a source of great sorrow to his people.—[14 64](#); [25 59](#).

Hereric.—Referred to as uncle of Heardred, but otherwise unknown.—[31 60](#).

Hetwars.—Another name for the Franks.—[33 51](#).

Healdene.—Grandson of Scyld and father of Hrothgar. Ruled the Danes long and well.—[2 5](#); [4 1](#); [8 14](#).

Heardred.—Son of Higelac and Hygd, king and queen of the Geats. Succeeds his father, with Beowulf as regent. Is slain by the sons of Ohthere.—[31 56](#); [33 63](#); [33 75](#).

Heathobards.—Race of Lombards, of which Froda is king. After Froda falls in battle with the Danes, Ingeld, his son, marries Hrothgar's daughter, Freaware, in order to heal the feud.—[30 1](#); [30 6](#).

Heatholaf.—A Wylfing warrior slain by Beowulf's father.—[8 5](#).

Heathoremes.—The people on whose shores Breca is cast by the waves during his contest with Beowulf.—[9 21](#).

Heorogar.—Elder brother of Hrothgar, and surnamed 'Weoroda Ræswa,' Prince of the Troopers.—[2 9](#); [8 12](#).

Hereward.—Son of the above.—[31 17](#).

Heort, Heorot.—The great mead-hall which King Hrothgar builds. It is invaded by Grendel for twelve years. Finally cleansed by Beowulf, the Geat. It is called Heort on account of the hart-antlers which decorate it.—[2 25](#); [3 32](#); [3 52](#).

Hildeburg.—Wife of Finn, daughter of Hoce, and related to Hnæf,—probably his sister.—[17 21](#); [18 34](#).

Hnæf.—Leader of a branch of the Danes called Half-Danes. Killed in the struggle at Finn's castle.—[17 19](#); [17 61](#).

Hondscio.—One of Beowulf's companions. Killed by Grendel just before Beowulf grappled with that monster.—[30 43](#).

Hoce.—Father of Hildeburg and probably of Hnæf.—[17 26](#).

Hrethel.—King of the Geats, father of Higelac, and grandfather of Beowulf.—[7 4](#); [34 39](#).

Hrethla.—Once used for Hrethel.—[7 82](#).

Hrethmen.—Another name for the Danes.—[7 73](#).

Hrethric.—Son of Hrothgar.—[18 65](#); [27 19](#).

Hreosna-beorh.—A promontory in Geatland, near which Ohthere's sons made plundering raids.—[35 18](#).

Hrothgar.—The Danish king who built the hall Heort, but was long unable to enjoy it on account of Grendel's persecutions. Marries Wealhtheow, a Helming lady. Has two sons and a daughter. Is a typical Teutonic king,

lavish of gifts. A devoted liegeland, as his lamentations over slain liegemen prove. Also very appreciative of kindness, as is shown by his loving gratitude to Beowulf.—[2 9](#); [2 12](#); [4 1](#); [8 10](#); [15 1](#); etc., etc.

Hrothmund.—Son of Hrothgar.—[18 65](#).

Hrothulf.—Probably a son of Halga, younger brother of Hrothgar. Certainly on terms of close intimacy in Hrothgar's palace.—[16 26](#); [18 57](#).

Hrunting.—Unferth's sword, lent to Beowulf.—[22 71](#); [25 9](#).

Hugs.—A race in alliance with the Franks and Frisians at the time of Higelac's fall.—[35 41](#).

Hun.—A Frisian warrior, probably general of the Hetwars. Gives Hengest a beautiful sword.—[18 19](#).

Hunferth.—Sometimes used for Unferth.

Hygelac, Higelac.—King of the Geats, uncle and liegeland of Beowulf, the hero of the poem.—His second wife is the lovely Hygd, daughter of Hæreth. The son of their union is Heardred. Is slain in a war with the Hugs, Franks, and Frisians combined. Beowulf is

regent, and afterwards king of the Geats.—[4 6](#);
[5 4](#); [28 34](#); [29 9](#); [29 21](#); [31 56](#).

Hygd.—Wife of Higelac, and daughter of Hæreth. There are some indications that she married Beowulf after she became a widow.—
[28 37](#).

Ingeld.—Son of the Heathobard king, Froda. Marries Hrothgar's daughter, Freaware, in order to reconcile the two peoples.—[29 62](#); [30 32](#).

Ingwins.—Another name for the Danes.—
[16 52](#); [20 69](#).

Jutes.—Name sometimes applied to Finn's people.—[17 22](#); [17 38](#); [18 17](#).

Lafing.—Name of a famous sword presented to Hengest by Hun.—[18 19](#).

Merewing.—A Frankish king, probably engaged in the war in which Higelac was slain.—[40 29](#).

Nægling.—Beowulf's sword.—[36 76](#).

Offa.—King of the Angles, and son of Garmund. Marries the terrible Thrytho who is so strongly contrasted with Hygd.—[28 59](#);
[28 66](#).

Ohthere.—Son of Ongentheow, king of the Swedes. He is father of Eanmund and Eadgils.—[40 35](#); [40 39](#).

Onela.—Brother of Ohthere.—[36 15](#); [40 39](#).

Ongentheow.—King of Sweden, of the Scylfing dynasty. Married, perhaps, Elan, daughter of Healfdene.—[35 26](#); [41 16](#).

Oslaf.—A Dane of Hnæf's party.—[18 24](#).

Ravenswood.—The forest near which Hæthcyn was slain.—[40 31](#); [40 41](#).

Scefing.—Applied ([1 4](#)) to Scyld, and meaning 'son of Scef.'

Scyld.—Founder of the dynasty to which Hrothgar, his father, and grandfather belonged. He dies, and his body is put on a vessel, and set adrift. He goes from Daneland just as he had come to it—in a bark.—[1 4](#); [1 19](#); [1 27](#).

Scyldings.—The descendants of Scyld. They are also called Honor-Scyldings, Victory-Scyldings, War-Scyldings, etc. (See 'Danes,' above.)—[2 1](#); [7 1](#); [8 1](#).

Scylfings.—A Swedish royal line to which Wiglaf belonged.—[36 2](#).

Sigemund.—Son of Wæls, and uncle and father of Fitela. His struggle with a dragon is related in connection with Beowulf's deeds of prowess.—[14 38](#); [14 47](#).

Swerting.—Grandfather of Higelac, and father of Hrethel.—[19 11](#).

Swedes.—People of Sweden, ruled by the Scylfings.—[35 13](#).

Thrytho.—Wife of Offa, king of the Angles. Known for her fierce and unwomanly disposition. She is introduced as a contrast to the gentle Hygd, queen of Higelac.—[28 42](#); [28 56](#).

Unferth.—Son of Ecglaf, and seemingly a confidential courtier of Hrothgar. Taunts Beowulf for having taken part in the swimming-match. Lends Beowulf his sword when he goes to look for Grendel's mother. In the MS. sometimes written *Hunferth*. [9 1](#); [18 41](#).

Wæls.—Father of Sigemund.—[14 60](#).

Wægmunding.—A name occasionally applied to Wiglaf and Beowulf, and perhaps

derived from a common ancestor,
Wægmund.—[36 6](#); [38 61](#).

Weders.—Another name for Geats or Wedergeats.

Wayland.—A fabulous smith mentioned in this poem and in other old Teutonic literature.—[7 83](#).

Wendels.—The people of Wulfgar, Hrothgar's messenger and retainer. (Perhaps = Vandals.)—[6 30](#).

Wealhtheow.—Wife of Hrothgar. Her queenly courtesy is well shown in the poem.—[10 55](#).

Weohstan, or Wihstan.—A Wægmunding, and father of Wiglaf.—[36 1](#).

Whale's Ness.—A prominent promontory, on which Beowulf's mound was built.—[38 52](#); [42 76](#).

Wiglaf.—Son of Wihstan, and related to Beowulf. He remains faithful to Beowulf in the fatal struggle with the fire-drake. Would rather die than leave his lord in his dire emergency.—[36 1](#); [36 3](#); [36 28](#).

Wonred.—Father of Wulf and Eofor.—[41 20](#); [41 26](#).

Wulf.—Son of Wonred. Engaged in the battle between Higelac's and Ongentheow's forces, and had a hand-to-hand fight with Ongentheow himself. Ongentheow disables him, and is thereupon slain by Eofor.—[41 19](#); [41 29](#).

Wulfgar.—Lord of the Wendels, and retainer of Hrothgar.—[6 18](#); [6 30](#).

Wylfings.—A people to whom belonged Heatholaf, who was slain by Ecgtheow.—[8 6](#); [8 16](#).

Yrmenlaf.—Younger brother of Æschere, the hero whose death grieved Hrothgar so deeply.—[21 4](#).

LIST OF WORDS AND PHRASES NOT IN GENERAL USE.

ATHELING.—Prince, nobleman.

BAIRN.—Son, child.

BARROW.—Mound, rounded hill,
funeral-mound.

BATTLE-SARK.—Armor.

BEAKER.—Cup, drinking-vessel.

BEGEAR.—Prepare.

BIGHT.—Bay, sea.

BILL.—Sword.

BOSS.—Ornamental projection.

BRACTEATE.—A round ornament on a
necklace.

BRAND.—Sword.

BURN.—Stream.

BURNIE.—Armor.

CARLE.—Man, hero.

EARL.—Nobleman, any brave man.

EKE.—Also.

EMPRISE.—Enterprise, undertaking.

ERST.—Formerly.

ERST-WORTHY.—Worthy for a long time past.

FAIN.—Glad.

FERRY.—Bear, carry.

FEY.—Fated, doomed.

FLOAT.—Vessel, ship.

FOIN.—To lunge (Shaks.).

GLORY OF KINGS.—God.

GREWSOME.—Cruel, fierce.

HEFT.—Handle, hilt; used by synecdoche for 'sword.'

HELM.—Helmet, protector.

HENCHMAN.—Retainer, vassal.

HIGHT.—Am (was) named.

HOLM.—Ocean, curved surface of the sea.

HIMSEEMED.—(It) seemed to him.

LIEF.—Dear, valued.

MERE.—Sea; in compounds, ‘mere-ways,’ ‘mere-currents,’ etc.

MICKLE.—Much.

NATHLESS.—Nevertheless.

NAZE.—Edge (nose).

NESS.—Edge.

NICKER.—Sea-beast.

QUIT, QUITE.—Requite.

RATHE.—Quickly.

REAVE.—Bereave, deprive.

SAIL-ROAD.—Sea.

SETTLE.—Seat, bench.

SKINKER.—One who pours.

SOOTHLY.—Truly.

SWINGE.—Stroke, blow.

TARGE, TARGET.—Shield.

THROUGHLY.—Thoroughly.

TOLD.—Counted.

UNCANNY.—Ill-featured, grizzly.

UNNETHE.—Difficult.

WAR-SPEED.—Success in war.

WEB.—Tapestry (that which is 'woven').

WEEDED.—Clad (cf. widow's weeds).

WEEN.—Suppose, imagine.

WEIRD.—Fate, Providence.

WHILOM.—At times, formerly, often.

WIELDER.—Ruler. Often used of God; also in compounds, as 'Wielder of Glory,' 'Wielder of Worship.'

WIGHT.—Creature.

WOLD.—Plane, extended surface.

WOT.—Knows.

YOUNKER.—Youth.

BEOWULF.

I.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SCYLD.

The famous race of
Spear-Danes.

Lo! the Spear-
Danes' glory through splendid
achievements

The folk-kings' former fame we
have heard of,

How princes displayed then their
prowess-in-battle.

Oft Scyld the
Scefing from
scathers in
numbers

Scyld, their mighty king,
in honor of whom they
are often called
Scyldings. He is the
great-grandfather of
Hrothgar, so prominent
in the poem.

5

From many a people their mead-
benches tore.

Since first he found him
friendless and wretched,

The earl had had terror: comfort
he got for it,

Waxed 'neath the welkin, world-
honor gained,

Till all his neighbors o'er sea
were compelled to

10

Bow to his bidding and bring him
their tribute:

An excellent atheling! After was
borne him

A son and heir,
young in his
dwelling,

A son is born to him, who
receives the name of
Beowulf—a name
afterwards made so
famous by the hero of the
poem.

Whom God-Father
sent to solace the people.

He had marked the misery
malice had caused them,

15

That reaved of their rulers they
wretched had erstwhile²

Long been afflicted. The Lord, in
requital,

Wielder of Glory, with world-
honor blessed him.

Famed was Beowulf, far spread
the glory

Of Scyld's great son in the lands
of the Danemen.

20

So the carle that is
young, by
kindnesses rendered

The ideal Teutonic king
lavishes gifts on his
vassals.

The friends of his father, with
fees in abundance

Must be able to earn that when
age approacheth

Eager companions aid him
requitingly,

When war assaults him serve him
as liegemen:

25

By praise-worthy actions must
honor be got

'Mong all of the races. At the
hour that was
fated

Scyld dies at the hour
appointed by Fate.

Scyld then
departed to the All-Father's
keeping

Warlike to wend him; away then
they bare him

To the flood of the current, his
fond-loving comrades,

30

As himself he had bidden, while
the friend of the Scyldings

Word-sway wielded, and the
well-lovèd land-prince

Long did rule them.³ The ring-
stemmèd vessel,

Bark of the atheling, lay there at
anchor,

Icy in glimmer and eager for
sailing;

35

The belovèd leader
laid they down

By his own request, his
body is laid on a vessel
and wafted seaward.

there,

Giver of rings, on the breast of
the vessel,

The famed by the mainmast. A
many of jewels,

Of fretted embossings, from far-
lands brought over,

Was placed near at hand then;
and heard I not ever

40

That a folk ever furnished a float
more superbly

With weapons of warfare, weeds
for the battle,

Bills and burnies; on his bosom
sparkled

Many a jewel that with him must
travel

On the flush of the flood afar on
the current.

45

And favors no fewer they
furnished him soothly,

Excellent folk-gems, than others
had given him

Who when first he He leaves Daneland on
the breast of a bark.
was born outward
did send him

Lone on the main, the merest of
infants:

And a gold-fashioned standard
they stretched under heaven

50

High o'er his head, let the holm-
currents bear him,

Seaward consigned him: sad was
their spirit,

Their mood very mournful. Men
are not able

Soothly to tell us,
they in halls who
reside,⁴

No one knows whither
the boat drifted.

Heroes under heaven, to what
haven he hied.

[1] For the 'Pæt' of verse 15, Sievers suggests 'Pá' (= which). If this be accepted, the sentence 'He had ... afflicted' will read: *He (i.e. God) had perceived the malice-caused sorrow which they, lordless, had formerly long endured.*

[2] For 'aldor-léase' (15) Gr. suggested 'aldor-ceare': *He perceived their distress, that they formerly had suffered life-sorrow a long while.*

[3] A very difficult passage. 'Áhte' (31) has no object. H. supplies 'geweald' from the context; and our translation is based upon this assumption, though it is far from satisfactory. Kl. suggests 'lændagas' for 'lange': *And the beloved land-prince enjoyed (had) his transitory days (i.e.*

lived). B. suggests a dislocation; but this is a dangerous doctrine, pushed rather far by that eminent scholar.

[4] The reading of the H.-So. text has been quite closely followed; but some eminent scholars read 'séle-rædenne' for 'sele-rædende.' If that be adopted, the passage will read: *Men cannot tell us, indeed, the order of Fate, etc.* 'Sele-rædende' has two things to support it: (1) v. 1347; (2) it affords a parallel to 'men' in [v. 50](#).

II.

SCYLD'S SUCCESSORS.— HROTHGAR'S GREAT MEAD- HALL.

In the boroughs
then Beowulf,
bairn of the Scyldings,

Beowulf succeeds his
father Scyld

Belovèd land-prince, for long-
lasting season

Was famed mid the folk (his
father departed,

The prince from his dwelling), till
afterward sprang

5

Great-minded Healfdene; the
Danes in his lifetime

He graciously governed, grim-
mooded, agèd.

Four bairns of his Healfdene's birth.
body born in succession

Woke in the world, war-troopers'
leader

Heorogar, Hrothgar, and Halga
the good;

10

Heard I that Elan was
Ongentheow's
consort,

The well-beloved
bedmate of the
War-Scylfing
leader.

He has three sons—one of
them, Hrothgar—and a
daughter named Elan.
Hrothgar becomes a
mighty king.

Then glory in battle to Hrothgar
was given,

Waxing of war-fame, that
willingly kinsmen

Obeeyed his bidding, till the boys
grew to manhood,

15

A numerous band. It burned in
his spirit

To urge his folk to found a great
building,

A mead-hall grander than men of
the era

Ever had heard of, He is eager to build a
great hall in which he
and in it to share may feast his retainers

With young and old all of the
blessings

20

The Lord had allowed him, save
life and retainers.

Then the work I find afar was
assigned

To many races in middle-earth's
regions,

To adorn the great folk-hall. In
due time it happened

Early 'mong men, that 'twas
finished entirely,

25

The greatest of hall-buildings;
Heorot he named
it

The hall is completed,
and is called Heort, or
Heorot.

Who wide-
reaching word-
sway wielded 'mong earlmen.

His promise he brake not, rings
he lavished,

Treasure at banquet. Towered
the hall up

High and horn-crested, huge
between antlers:

30

It battle-waves bided, the
blasting fire-demon;

Ere long then from hottest hatred
must sword-wrath

Arise for a woman's husband and
father.

Then the mighty war-spirit¹
endured for a
season,

The Monster Grendel is
madly envious of the
Danemen's joy.

Bore it bitterly, he
who bided in
darkness,

35

That light-hearted laughter loud
in the building

Greeted him daily; there was
dulcet harp-music,

Clear song of the singer. He said
that was able

To tell from of old [The course of the story is
earthmen's interrupted by a short
beginnings, reference to some old
account of the creation.]

That Father Almighty earth had
created,

40

The winsome wold that the water
encircleth,

Set exultingly the sun's and the
moon's beams

To lavish their lustre on land-folk
and races,

And earth He embellished in all
her regions

With limbs and leaves; life He
bestowed too

45

On all the kindreds that live
under heaven.

So blessed with
abundance,
brimming with
joyance,

The glee of the warriors is
overcast by a horrible
dread.

The warriors abided, till a certain
one gan to

Dog them with deeds of
direfullest malice,

A foe in the hall-building: this
horrible stranger²

50

Was Grendel entitled, the march-
stepper famous

Who³ dwelt in the moor-fens, the
marsh and the fastness;

The wan-mooded being abode for
a season

In the land of the giants, when
the Lord and Creator

Had banned him and branded.
For that bitter murder,

55

The killing of Abel, all-ruling
Father

The kindred of
Cain crushed with
His vengeance;

Cain is referred to as a
progenitor of Grendel,
and of monsters in
general.

In the feud He rejoiced not, but
far away drove him

From kindred and kind, that
crime to atone for,

Meter of Justice. Thence ill-
favored creatures,

60

Elves and giants, monsters of
ocean,

Came into being, and the giants
that longtime

Grappled with God; He gave
them requital.

[1] R. and t. B. prefer 'ellor-gæst' to 'ellen-gæst' (86): *Then the stranger from afar endured, etc.*

[2] Some authorities would translate 'demon' instead of 'stranger.'

[3] Some authorities arrange differently, and render: *Who dwelt in the moor-fens, the marsh and the fastness, the land of the giant-race.*

III.

GREDEL THE MURDERER.

Grendel attacks the
sleeping heroes

When the sun was
sunken, he set out to visit

The lofty hall-building, how the
Ring-Danes had used it

For beds and benches when the
banquet was over.

Then he found there reposing
many a noble

5

Asleep after supper; sorrow the
heroes,¹

Misery knew not. The monster of
evil

Greedy and cruel tarried but
little,

Fell and frantic,
and forced from
their slumbers

He drags off thirty of
them, and devours them

Thirty of thanemen; thence he
departed

10

Leaping and laughing, his lair to
return to,

With surfeit of slaughter sallying
homeward.

In the dusk of the dawning, as
the day was just breaking,

Was Grendel's prowess revealed
to the warriors:

A cry of agony goes up,
when Grendel's horrible
deed is fully realized.

Then, his meal-taking finished, a
moan was uplifted,

15

Morning-cry mighty. The man-
ruler famous,

The long-worthy atheling, sat
very woful,

Suffered great sorrow, sighed for
his liegemen,

When they had seen the track of
the hateful pursuer,

The spirit accursèd: too crushing
that sorrow,

20

The monster returns the
next night.

Too loathsome
and lasting. Not longer he
tarried,

But one night after continued his
slaughter

Shameless and shocking,
shrinking but little

From malice and murder; they
mastered him fully.

He was easy to find then who
otherwhere looked for

25

A pleasanter place of repose in
the lodges,

A bed in the bowers. Then was
brought to his notice

Told him truly by token apparent

The hall-thane's hatred: he held
himself after

Further and faster who the
foeman did baffle.

30

²So ruled he and strongly strove
against justice

Lone against all men, till empty
uptowered

The choicest of
houses. Long was
the season:

King Hrothgar's agony
and suspense last twelve
years.

Twelve-winters' time torture
suffered

The friend of the Scyldings, every
affliction,

35

Endless agony; hence it after³
became

Certainly known to the children
of men

Sadly in measures, that long
against Hrothgar

Grendel struggled:—his grudges
he cherished,

Murderous malice, many a
winter,

40

Strife unremitting, and
peacefully wished he

4Life-woe to lift from no liegeman
at all of

The men of the Dane-folk, for
money to settle,

No counsellor needed count for a
moment

On handsome amends at the
hands of the
murderer;

Grendel is unremitting in
his persecutions.

45

The monster of evil fiercely did
harass,

The ill-planning death-shade,
both elder and younger,

Trapping and tricking them. He
trod every night then

The mist-covered moor-fens;
men do not know where

Witches and wizards wander and
ramble.

50

So the foe of mankind many of
evils

Grievous injuries, often
accomplished,

Horrible hermit; Heort he
frequented,

Gem-bedecked palace, when
night-shades had
fallen

God is against the
monster.

(Since God did
oppose him, not the throne could
he touch,⁵

55

The light-flashing jewel, love of
Him knew not).

'Twas a fearful affliction to the
friend of the
Scyldings

The king and his council
deliberate in vain.

Soul-crushing
sorrow. Not seldom in private

Sat the king in his council;
conference held they

What the braves should
determine 'gainst terrors
unlooked for.

60

They invoke the aid of
their gods.

At the shrines of
their idols often they promised

Gifts and offerings, earnestly
prayed they

The devil from hell would help
them to lighten

Their people's oppression. Such
practice they used then,

Hope of the heathen; hell they
remembered

65

In innermost spirit, God they
knew not,

Judge of their
actions, All-
wielding Ruler,

The true God they do not
know.

No praise could they give the
Guardian of Heaven,

The Wielder of Glory. Woe will
be his who

Through furious hatred his spirit
shall drive to

70

The clutch of the fire, no comfort
shall look for,

Wax no wiser; well for the man
who,

Living his life-days, his Lord may
face

And find defence in his Father's embrace!

[1] The translation is based on 'weras,' adopted by H.-So.—K. and Th. read 'wera' and, arranging differently, render 119(2)-120: *They knew not sorrow, the wretchedness of man, aught of misfortune.*—For 'unhælo' (120) R. suggests 'unfælo': *The uncanny creature, greedy and cruel, etc.*

[2] S. rearranges and translates: *So he ruled and struggled unjustly, one against all, till the noblest of buildings stood useless (it was a long while) twelve years' time: the friend of the Scyldings suffered distress, every woe, great sorrows, etc.*

[3] For 'syððan,' B. suggests 'sárcwidum': *Hence in mournful words it became well known, etc.* Various other words beginning with 's' have been conjectured.

[4] The H.-So. glossary is very inconsistent in referring to this passage.—'Sibbe' (154), which H.-So. regards as an instr., B. takes as accus., obj. of 'wolde.' Putting a comma after Deniga, he renders: *He did not desire peace with any of the Danes, nor did he wish to remove their life-woe, nor to settle for money.*

[5] Of this difficult passage the following interpretations among others are given: (1) Though Grendel has frequented Heorot as a demon, he could not become ruler of the Danes, on account of his hostility to God. (2) Hrothgar was much grieved that Grendel had not appeared before his throne to receive presents. (3) He was not permitted to devastate the hall, on account of the Creator; *i.e.* God wished to make his visit fatal to him.—Ne ... wisse (169) W. renders: *Nor had he any desire to do so; 'his' being obj. gen. = danach.*

IV.

BEOWULF GOES TO HROTHGAR'S ASSISTANCE.

Hrothgar sees no way of
escape from the
persecutions of Grendel.

So Healfdene's
kinsman

constantly mused on

His long-lasting sorrow; the
battle-thane clever

Was not anywise able evils to
'scape from:

Too crushing the sorrow that
came to the people,

5

Loathsome and lasting the life-
grinding torture,

Greatest of night-woes. So Higelac's liegeman,

Beowulf, the Geat, hero of the poem, hears of Hrothgar's sorrow, and resolves to go to his assistance.

Good amid Geatmen, of Grendel's achievements

Heard in his home: of heroes then living

He was stoutest and strongest, sturdy and noble.

10

He bade them prepare him a bark that was trusty;

He said he the war-king would seek o'er the ocean,

The folk-leader noble, since he needed retainers.

For the perilous project prudent companions

Chided him little, though loving
him dearly;

15

They egged the brave atheling,
augured him glory.

The excellent
knight from the
folk of the
Geatmen

With fourteen carefully
chosen companions, he
sets out for Dane-land.

Had liegemen selected, likest to
prove them

Trustworthy warriors; with
fourteen companions

The vessel he looked for; a
liegeman then showed them,

20

A sea-crafty man, the bounds of
the country.

Fast the days fled; the float
was a-water,

The craft by the cliff. Clomb to
the prow then

Well-equipped warriors: the
wave-currents twisted

The sea on the sand; soldiers
then carried

25

On the breast of the vessel
bright-shining jewels,

Handsome war-armor; heroes
outshoved then,

Warmen the wood-ship, on its
wished-for adventure.

The foamy-necked The vessel sails like a bird
floater fanned by the breeze,

Likest a bird,
glided the waters,

In twenty four hours they
reach the shores of
Hrothgar's dominions

30

Till twenty and
four hours thereafter

The twist-stemmed vessel had
traveled such distance

That the sailing-men saw the
sloping embankments,

The sea cliffs gleaming,
precipitous mountains,

Nesses enormous: they were
nearing the limits

35

At the end of the ocean.² Up
thence quickly

The men of the Weders clomb to
the mainland,

Fastened their vessel (battle
weeds rattled,

War burnies clattered), the
Wielder they thanked

That the ways o'er the waters had
waxen so gentle.

40

They are hailed by the
Danish coast guard

Then well from the
cliff edge the guard of the
Scyldings

Who the sea-cliffs should see to,
saw o'er the gangway

Brave ones bearing beauteous
targets,

Armor all ready, anxiously
thought he,

Musing and wondering what men
were approaching.

High on his horse then
Hrothgar's retainer

Turned him to coastward,
mightily brandished

His lance in his hands,
questioned with
boldness.

His challenge

“Who are ye men here, mail-
covered warriors

Clad in your corslets, come thus
a-driving

A high riding ship o'er the shoals
of the waters,

³And hither 'neath helmets have
hied o'er the ocean?

I have been strand-guard,
standing as warden,

Lest enemies ever anywise ravage
Danish dominions with army of
war-ships.

55

More boldly never have warriors
ventured

Hither to come; of kinsmen's
approval,

Word-leave of warriors, I ween
that ye surely

Nothing have
known. Never a
greater one

He is struck by Beowulf's
appearance.

Of earls o'er the earth have *I* had
a sight of

60

Than is one of your number, a
hero in armor;

No low-ranking fellow⁴ adorned
with his weapons,

But launching them little, unless
looks are deceiving,

And striking appearance. Ere ye
pass on your journey

As treacherous spies to the land
of the Scyldings

65

And farther fare, I fully must
know now

What race ye belong to. Ye far-
away dwellers,

Sea-faring sailors, my simple
opinion

Hear ye and hearken: haste is
most fitting

Plainly to tell me what place ye
are come from.”

[1] ‘From hám’ (194) is much disputed. One rendering is: *Beowulf, being away from home, heard of Hrothgar’s troubles, etc.* Another, that adopted by S. and endorsed in the H.-So. notes, is: *B. heard from his neighborhood (neighbors), i.e. in his home, etc.* A third is: *B., being at home, heard this as occurring away from home.* The H.-So. glossary and notes conflict.

[2] ‘Eoletes’ (224) is marked with a (?) by H.-So.; our rendering simply follows his conjecture.—Other conjectures as to ‘eolet’ are: (1) *voyage*, (2) *toil, labor*, (3) *hasty journey*.

[3] The lacuna of the MS at this point has been supplied by various conjectures. The reading adopted by H.-So. has been rendered in the above translation. W., like H.-So., makes ‘ic’ the beginning of a new sentence, but, for ‘helmas bæron,’ he reads ‘hringed stefnan.’ This has the advantage of giving a parallel to ‘brontne ceol’ instead of a kenning for ‘go.’—B puts the (?) after ‘holmas’, and begins a new sentence at the middle of the line. Translate: *What warriors are ye, clad in armor, who have thus come bringing the foaming vessel over the water way, hither over the seas? For some time on the wall I have been coast guard, etc.* S. endorses most of what B. says, but leaves out ‘on the wall’ in the last sentence. If W.’s ‘hringed stefnan’ be accepted, change [line 51](#) above to, *A ring-stemmed vessel hither o’ersea.*

[4] 'Seld-guma' (249) is variously rendered: (1) *housecarle*; (2) *home-stayer*; (3) *common man*. Dr. H. Wood suggests a *man-at-arms in another's house*.

V.

THE GEATS REACH HEOROT.

Beowulf courteously
replies.

The chief of the
strangers rendered him answer,

War-troopers' leader, and word-
treasure opened:

“We are sprung We are Geats.
from the lineage of the people of
Geatland,

And Higelac's hearth-friends. To
heroes
unnumbered

My father Ecgtheow was
well-known in his day.

5

My father was known, a noble
head-warrior

Ecgtheow titled; many a winter

He lived with the people, ere he
passed on his journey,

Old from his dwelling; each of
the counsellors

Widely mid world-folk well
remembers him.

10

We, kindly of
spirit, the lord of
thy people,

Our intentions towards
King Hrothgar are of the
kindest.

The son of King Healfdene, have
come here to visit,

Folk-troop's defender: be free in
thy counsels!

To the noble one bear we a
weighty commission,

The helm of the Danemen; we
shall hide, I ween,

15

Is it true that a monster is
slaying Danish heroes?

Naught of our
message. Thou know'st if it
happen,

As we soothly heard say, that
some savage despoiler,

Some hidden pursuer, on nights
that are murky

By deeds very direful 'mid the
Danemen exhibits

Hatred unheard of, horrid
destruction

20

And the falling of dead. From
feelings least selfish

I am able to render
counsel to
Hrothgar,

I can help your king to
free himself from this
horrible creature.

How he, wise and worthy, may
worst the destroyer,

If the anguish of sorrow should
ever be lessened,¹

Comfort come to him, and care-
waves grow cooler,

25

Or ever hereafter he agony suffer
And troublous distress, while
towereth upward

The handsomest of houses high
on the summit.”

Bestriding his
stallion, the
strand-watchman

The coast-guard reminds
Beowulf that it is easier to
say than to do.

answered,

The doughty retainer: “The
difference surely

30

’Twixt words and works, the
warlike shield-bearer

Who judgeth wisely well shall
determine.

This band, I hear, beareth no
malice

To the prince of the Scyldings. Pass
ye then onward

I am satisfied of your
good intentions, and shall
lead you to the palace.

With weapons and armor. I shall
lead you in person;

35

To my war-trusty vassals
command I shall issue

To keep from all injury your
excellent vessel,

Your fresh-tarred
craft, 'gainst every
opposer

Your boat shall be well
cared for during your stay
here.

Close by the sea-shore, till the
curved-neckèd bark shall

Waft back again the well-beloved
hero

40

O'er the way of the water to
Weder dominions.

To warrior so great
'twill be granted
sure

He again compliments
Beowulf.

In the storm of strife to stand
secure.”

Onward they fared then (the
vessel lay quiet,

The broad-bosomed bark was
bound by its cable,

45

Firmly at anchor); the boar-signs
glistened²

Bright on the visors vivid with
gilding,

Blaze-hardened, brilliant; the
boar acted warden.

The heroes hastened, hurried the
liegemen,

Descended
together, till they
saw the great palace,

The land is perhaps
rolling.

50

The well-fashioned wassail-hall
wondrous and
gleaming:

Heorot flashes on their
view.

'Mid world-folk
and kindreds that was widest
reputed

Of halls under heaven which the
hero abode in;

Its lustre enlightened lands
without number.

Then the battle-brave hero
showed them the glittering

55

Court of the bold ones, that they
easily thither

Might fare on their journey; the
aforementioned warrior

Turning his courser, quoth as he
left them:

“’Tis time I were
faring; Father
Almighty

The coast-guard, having
discharged his duty, bids
them God-speed.

Grant you His grace, and give
you to journey

60

Safe on your mission! To the sea
I will get me

’Gainst hostile warriors as
warden to stand.”

[1] ‘Edwendan’ (280) B. takes to be the subs. ‘edwenden’ (cf. 1775); and ‘bisigu’ he takes as gen. sing., limiting ‘edwenden’: *If reparation for sorrows is ever to come*. This is supported by t.B.

[2] Combining the emendations of B. and t.B., we may read: *The boar-images glistened ... brilliant, protected the life of the war-mooded man*. They read ‘ferh-wearde’ (305) and ‘gúðmódgum men’ (306).

VI.

BEOWULF INTRODUCES HIMSELF AT THE PALACE.

The highway glistened with
many-hued pebble,

A by-path led the liegemen
together.

Firm and hand-locked the war-
burnie glistened,

The ring-sword radiant rang 'mid
the armor

5

As the party was approaching the
palace together

In warlike
equipments.

They set their arms and
armor against the wall.

'Gainst the wall of the building

Their wide-fashioned war-shields
they weary did set then,

Battle-shields sturdy; benchward
they turned then;

Their battle-sarks rattled, the
gear of the heroes;

10

The lances stood up then, all in a
cluster,

The arms of the seamen, ashen-
shafts mounted

With edges of iron: the armor-
clad troopers

Were decked with
weapons. Then a
proud-mooded
hero

A Danish hero asks them
whence and why they are
come.

Asked of the champions
questions of lineage:

15

“From what borders bear ye your
battle-shields plated,

Gilded and gleaming, your gray-
colored burnies,

Helmets with visors and heap of
war-lances?—

To Hrothgar the king I am
servant and liegeman.

’Mong folk from far-lands found I
have never

20

Men so many of
mien more
courageous.

He expresses no little
admiration for the
strangers.

I ween that from valor, nowise as
outlaws,

But from greatness of soul ye
sought for King
Hrothgar.”

Beowulf replies.

Then the strength-famous
earlman answer rendered,

The proud-mooded Wederchief
replied to his
question,

25

We are Higelac's table-
companions, and bear an
important commission to
your prince.

Hardy 'neath
helmet: “Higelac's mates are we;

Beowulf hight I. To the bairn of
Healfdene,

The famous folk-leader, I freely
will tell

To thy prince my commission, if
pleasantly hearing

He'll grant we may greet him so
gracious to all men.”

30

Wulfgar replied then (he was
prince of the Wendels,

His boldness of spirit was known
unto many,

His prowess and prudence): “The
prince of the
Scyldings,

The friend-lord of
Danemen, I will
ask of thy journey,

Wulfgar, the thane, says
that he will go and ask
Hrothgar whether he will
see the strangers.

The giver of rings, as thou urgest
me do it,

35

The folk-chief famous, and
inform thee early

What answer the good one
mindeth to render me.”

He turned then hurriedly where
Hrothgar was sitting,

2 Old and hoary, his earlmen
attending him;

The strength-famous went till he
stood at the shoulder

40

Of the lord of the Danemen, of
courteous thanemen

The custom he minded. Wulfgar
addressed then

His friendly liegelord: “Folk of
the Geatmen

O'er the way of the waters are wafted
hither,

He thereupon urges his liegelord to receive the visitors courteously.

Faring from far-lands: the
foremost in rank

45

The battle-champions Beowulf
title.

They make this petition: with
thee, O my chieftain,

To be granted a conference; O
gracious King Hrothgar,

Friendly answer refuse not to
give them!

In war-trappings
weeded worthy

Hrothgar, too, is struck with Beowulf's appearance.

they seem

50

Of earls to be honored; sure the
atheling is doughty

Who headed the heroes
hitherward coming.”

[1] Instead of the punctuation given by H.-So, S. proposed to insert a comma after ‘scír’ (322), and to take ‘hring-íren’ as meaning ‘ring-mail’ and as parallel with ‘gúð-byrne.’ The passage would then read: *The firm and hand-locked war-burnie shone, bright ring-mail, rang ’mid the armor, etc.*

[2] Gr. and others translate ‘unhár’ by ‘bald’; *old and bald.*

VII.

HROTHGAR AND BEOWULF.

Hrothgar remembers
Beowulf as a youth, and
also remembers his
father.

Hrothgar
answered, helm of
the Scyldings:

“I remember this man as the
merest of striplings.

His father long dead now was
Ecgtheow titled,

Him Hrethel the Geatman
granted at home his

5
One only daughter; his battle-
brave son

Is come but now, sought a
trustworthy friend.

Seafaring sailors
asserted it then,

Beowulf is reported to
have the strength of
thirty men.

Who valuable gift-
gems of the
Geatmen¹ carried

As peace-offering thither, that he
thirty men's grapple

10

Has in his hand, the hero-in-
battle.

The holy Creator
usward sent him,

God hath sent him to our
rescue.

To West-Dane warriors, I ween,
for to render

'Gainst Grendel's grimness
gracious assistance:

I shall give to the good one gift-
gems for courage.

Hasten to bid them hither to
speed them,²

To see assembled this circle of
kinsmen;

Tell them expressly they're
welcome in sooth to

The men of the Danes.” To the
door of the building

Wulfgar went
then, this word-
message shouted:

Wulfgar invites the
strangers in.

“My victorious liegelord bade me
to tell you,

The East-Danes' atheling, that
your origin knows he,

And o'er wave-billows wafted ye
welcome are hither,

Valiant of spirit. Ye straightway
may enter

Clad in corslets, cased in your
helmets,

25

To see King Hrothgar. Here let
your battle-boards,

Wood-spears and war-shafts,
await your conferring.”

The mighty one rose then, with
many a liegeman,

An excellent thane-group; some
there did await them,

And as bid of the brave one the
battle-gear guarded.

30

Together they hied them, while
the hero did guide them,

'Neath Heorot's roof; the high-
minded went then

Sturdy 'neath helmet till he stood
in the building.

Beowulf spake (his burnie did
glisten,

His armor seamed over by the art
of the craftsman):

35

"Hail thou,
Hrothgar! I am
Higelac's kinsman

Beowulf salutes
Hrothgar, and then
proceeds to boast of his
youthful achievements.

And vassal forsooth; many a
wonder

I dared as a stripling. The doings
of Grendel,

In far-off fatherland I fully did
know of:

Sea-farers tell us, this hall-
building standeth,

40

Excellent edifice, empty and
useless

To all the earlmen after
evenlight's glimmer

'Neath heaven's bright hues hath
hidden its glory.

This my earls then urged me, the
most excellent of them,

Carles very clever, to come and
assist thee,

45

Folk-leader Hrothgar; fully they
knew of

The strength of my His fight with the nickers.
body. Themselves they beheld me

When I came from the contest,
when covered with gore

Foes I escaped from, where five³ I
had bound,

The giant-race wasted, in the
waters destroying

50

The nickers by night, bore
numberless sorrows,

The Weders avenged (woes had
they suffered)

Enemies ravaged; alone now with
Grendel

I shall manage the He intends to fight
Grendel unaided.

matter, with the monster of evil,
The giant, decide it. Thee I would
therefore

55

Beg of thy bounty, Bright-Danish
chieftain,

Lord of the Scyldings, this single
petition:

Not to refuse me, defender of
warriors,

Friend-lord of folks, so far have I
sought thee,

That *I* may unaided, my earlmen
assisting me,

60

This brave-mooded war-band,
purify Heorot.

I have heard on inquiry, the
horrible creature

From veriest Since the monster uses
no weapons,
rashness recks not
for weapons;

I this do scorn then, so be
Higelac gracious,

My liegelord belovèd, lenient of
spirit,

65

To bear a blade or a broad-
fashioned target,

A shield to the onset; only with
hand-grip

The foe I must I, too, shall disdain to use
any.
grapple, fight for
my life then,

Foeman with foeman; he fain
must rely on

The doom of the Lord whom
death layeth hold
of.

70

Should he crush me, he
will eat my companions
as he has eaten thy
thanes.

I ween he will
wish, if he win in the struggle,

To eat in the war-hall earls of the
Geat-folk,

Boldly to swallow⁴ them, as of
yore he did often

The best of the Hrethmen! Thou
needest not trouble

A head-watch to give me;⁵ he will
have me dripping

In case of my defeat, thou
wilt not have the trouble
of burying me.

And dreary with
gore, if death
overtake me,⁶

Will bear me off bleeding, biting
and mouthing me,

The hermit will eat me, heedless
of pity,

Marking the moor-fens; no more
wilt thou need
then

Find me my food.^z

Should I fall, send my
armor to my lord, King
Higelac.

If I fall in the
battle,

Send to Higelac the armor that
serveth

To shield my bosom, the best of
equipments,

Richest of ring-mails; 'tis the
relic of Hrethla,

The work of Weird is supreme
Wayland. Goes Weird as she
must go!"

[1] Some render 'gif-sceattas' by 'tribute.'—'Géata' B. and Th. emended to 'Géatum.' If this be accepted, change 'of the Geatmen' to 'to the Geatmen.'

[2] If t.B.'s emendation of vv. 386, 387 be accepted, the two lines, 'Hasten ... kinsmen' will read: *Hasten thou, bid the throng of kinsmen go into the hall together.*

[3] For 420 (b) and 421 (a), B. suggests: *Þær ic (on) fifelgeban ýðde eotena cyn = where I in the ocean destroyed the eoten-race.*—t.B. accepts B.'s "brilliant" 'fifelgeban,' omits 'on,' emends 'cyn' to 'hám,' arranging: *Þær ic fifelgeban ýðde, eotena hám = where I desolated the ocean, the home of the eotens.*—This would be better but for changing 'cyn' to 'hám.'—I suggest: *Þær ic fifelgeband (cf. nhd. Bande) ýðde, eotena cyn = where I conquered the monster band, the race of the eotens.* This makes no change except to read 'fifel' for 'fife.'

[4] 'Unforhte' (444) is much disputed.—H.-So. wavers between adj. and adv. Gr. and B. take it as an adv. modifying *etan*: *Will eat the Geats fearlessly.*—Kl. considers this reading absurd, and proposes 'anforhte' = timid.—Understanding 'unforhte' as an adj. has this

advantage, viz. that it gives a parallel to 'Geátena leóde': but to take it as an adv. is more natural. Furthermore, to call the Geats 'brave' might, at this point, seem like an implied thrust at the Danes, so long helpless; while to call his own men 'timid' would be befouling his own nest.

[5] For 'head-watch,' cf. H.-So. notes and cf. v. 2910.—Th. translates: *Thou wilt not need my head to hide* (i.e., thou wilt have no occasion to bury me, as Grendel will devour me whole).—Simrock imagines a kind of dead-watch.—Dr. H. Wood suggests: *Thou wilt not have to bury so much as my head* (for Grendel will be a thorough undertaker),—grim humor.

[6] S. proposes a colon after 'nimeð' (l. 447). This would make no essential change in the translation.

[7] Owing to the vagueness of 'feorme' (451), this passage is variously translated. In our translation, H.-So.'s glossary has been quite closely followed. This agrees substantially with B.'s translation (P. and B. XII. 87). R. translates: *Thou needst not take care longer as to the consumption of my dead body*. 'Líc' is also a crux here, as it may mean living body or dead body.

VIII.

HROTHGAR AND BEOWULF.— *CONTINUED.*

Hrothgar Hrothgar responds.

discoursed, helm of the
Scyldings:

“To defend our folk and to
furnish assistance,¹

Thou soughtest us hither, good
friend Beowulf.

The fiercest of
feuds thy father
engaged in,

Reminiscences of
Beowulf's father,
Ecgtheow.

5
Heatholaf killed he in hand-to-
hand conflict

'Mid Wilfingish warriors; then
the Wederish people

For fear of a feud were forced to
disown him.

Thence flying he fled to the folk
of the South-Danes,

The race of the Scyldings, o'er the
roll of the waters;

10

I had lately begun then to govern
the Danemen,

The hoard-seat of heroes held in
my youth,

Rich in its jewels: dead was
Heregar,

My kinsman and elder had earth-
joys forsaken,

Healfdene his bairn. He was
better than I am!

That feud thereafter for a fee I
compounded;

O'er the weltering waters to the
Wilfings I sent

Ornaments old; oaths did he
swear me.

It pains me in
spirit to any to tell
it,

Hrothgar recounts to
Beowulf the horrors of
Grendel's persecutions.

What grief in Heorot Grendel
hath caused me,

What horror unlooked-for, by
hatred unceasing.

Waned is my war-band, wasted
my hall-troop;

Weird hath offcast them to the
clutches of Grendel.

God can easily hinder the scather
From deeds so direful. Oft
drunken with beer

25

O'er the ale-vessel
promised warriors
in armor

My thanes have made
many boasts, but have
not executed them.

They would willingly wait on the
wassailing-benches

A grapple with Grendel, with
grimmet of edges.

Then this mead-hall at morning
with murder was reeking,

The building was bloody at
breaking of daylight,

30

The bench-deals all flooded,
dripping and bloodied,

The folk-hall was gory: I had
fewer retainers,

Dear-beloved warriors, whom
death had laid
hold of.

Sit down to the feast, and
give us comfort.

Sit at the feast
now, thy intents unto heroes,²

Thy victor-fame show, as thy
spirit doth urge
thee!”

A bench is made ready
for Beowulf and his party.

35

For the men of the Geats then
together assembled,

In the beer-hall blithesome a
bench was made ready;

There warlike in spirit they went
to be seated,

Proud and exultant. A liegeman
did service,

Who a beaker embellished bore
with decorum,

40

The gleeman sings

And gleaming-
drink poured. The gleeman sang
whilom

Hearty in Heorot; The heroes all rejoice
there was heroes' together.
rejoicing,

A numerous war-band of Weders
and Danemen.

[1] B. and S. reject the reading given in H.-So., and suggested by Grtv. B. suggests for 457-458:

wáere-ryhtum Þú, wine mín Béowulf,

and for ár-stafum úsic sóhtest.

This means: *From the obligations of clientage, my friend Beowulf, and for assistance thou hast sought us.*—This gives coherence to Hrothgar's opening remarks in VIII., and also introduces a new motive for Beowulf's coming to Hrothgar's aid.

[2] *Sit now at the feast, and disclose thy purposes to the victorious heroes, as thy spirit urges.*—Kl. reaches the above translation by erasing the comma after 'meoto' and reading 'sige-hrèðsecgum.'—There are other and bolder emendations and suggestions. Of these the boldest is to regard 'meoto' as a verb (imperative), and read 'on sæl': *Think upon gayety, etc.*—All the renderings are unsatisfactory, the one given in our translation involving a zeugma.

IX.

UNFERTH TAUNTS

BEOWULF.

Unferth, a thane of Hrothgar, is jealous of Beowulf, and undertakes to twit him.

Unferth spoke up,
Ecglaf his son,

Who sat at the feet of the lord of
the Scyldings,

Opened the jousting (the journey¹
of Beowulf,

Sea-farer doughty, gave sorrow
to Unferth

5

And greatest chagrin, too, for
granted he never

That any man else on earth
should attain to,

Gain under heaven, more glory
than he):

“Art thou that
Beowulf with
Breca did struggle,

Did you take part in a
swimming-match with
Breca?

On the wide sea-currents at
swimming contended,

10

Where to humor your pride the
ocean ye tried,

From vainest
vaunting
adventured your
bodies

'Twas mere folly that
actuated you both to risk
your lives on the ocean.

In care of the waters? And no one
was able

Nor lief nor loth one, in the least
to dissuade you

Your difficult voyage; then ye
ventured a-swimming,

15

Where your arms outstretching
the streams ye did cover,

The mere-ways measured,
mixing and stirring them,

Glided the ocean; angry the
waves were,

With the weltering of winter. In
the water's possession,

Ye toiled for a seven-night; he at
swimming outdid thee,

20

In strength excelled thee. Then
early at morning

On the Heathoremes' shore the
holm-currents tossed him,

Sought he thenceward the home
of his fathers,

Beloved of his liegemen, the land
of the Brondings,

The peace-castle pleasant, where
a people he wielded,

25

Had borough and jewels. The
pledge that he
made thee

Breca outdid you entirely.

The son of Beanstan hath soothly
accomplished.

Then I ween thou wilt find thee
less fortunate
issue,

Much more will Grendel
outdo you, if you vie with
him in prowess.

Though ever
triumphant in
onset of battle,

A grim grappling, if Grendel thou
darest

30

For the space of a night near-by
to wait for!”

Beowulf answered, Beowulf retaliates.
offspring of Ecgtheow:

“My good friend Unferth, sure
freely and wildly,

Thou fuddled with O friend Unferth, you are
beer of Breca hast fuddled with beer, and
spoken, cannot talk coherently.

Hast told of his journey! A fact I
allege it,

35

That greater strength in the
waters I had then,

Ills in the ocean, than any man
else had.

We made agreement as the
merest of striplings

Promised each other (both of us
then were

Younkers in years) We simply kept an
that we yet would engagement made in
adventure early life.

40

Out on the ocean; it all we
accomplished.

While swimming the sea-floods,
sword-blade unscabbarded

Boldly we brandished, our bodies
expected

To shield from the sharks. He
sure was unable

To swim on the
waters further
than I could,

He *could* not excel me,
and I *would* not excel
him.

45

More swift on the waves, nor
would I from him go.

Then we two companions stayed
in the ocean

Five nights
together, till the
currents did part us,

After five days the
currents separated us.

The weltering waters, weathers
the bleakest,

And nethermost night, and the
north-wind whistled

50

Fierce in our faces; fell were the
billows.

The mere fishes' mood was
mightily ruffled:

And there against foemen my
firm-knotted corslet,

Hand-jointed, hardy, help did
afford me;

My battle-sark braided,
brilliantly gilded,

55

Lay on my bosom.

To the bottom
then dragged me,

A hateful fiend-scather, seized
me and held me,

Grim in his grapple: 'twas
granted me, nathless,

To pierce the monster with the
point of my weapon,

A horrible sea-beast
attacked me, but I slew
him.

My obedient blade; battle
offcarried

60

The mighty mere-creature by
means of my hand-blow.

[1] It has been plausibly suggested that 'síð' (in 501 and in 353) means 'arrival.' If so, translate the bracket: (*the arrival of Beowulf, the brave seafarer, was a source of great chagrin to Unferth, etc.*).

X.

BOWULF SILENCES UNFERTH.— GLEE IS HIGH.

“So ill-meaning enemies often
did cause me

Sorrow the sorest. I served them,
in quittance,

With my dear-
lovèd sword, as in
sooth it was fitting;

*My dear sword always
served me faithfully.*

They missed the pleasure of
feasting abundantly,

5
Ill-doers evil, of eating my body,

Of surrounding the banquet deep
in the ocean;

But wounded with edges early at
morning

They were stretched a-high on
the strand of the
ocean,

Put to sleep with
the sword, that
sea-going travelers

I put a stop to the
outrages of the sea-
monsters.

10

No longer thereafter were
hindered from sailing

The foam-dashing currents.
Came a light from the east,

God's beautiful beacon; the
billows subsided,

That well I could see the nesses
projecting,

The blustering
crag. Weir'd often
saveth

Fortune helps the brave
earl.

15

The undoomed hero if doughty
his valor!

But me did it fortune¹ to fell with
my weapon

Nine of the nickers. Of night-
struggle harder

'Neath dome of the heaven heard
I but rarely,

Nor of wight more woful in the
waves of the ocean;

20

Yet I 'scaped with my life the grip
of the monsters,

Weary from travel. After that escape I drifted
to Finland.
Then the waters
bare me

To the land of the Finns, the
flood with the
current,

The weltering
waves. Not a word
hath been told me

I have never heard of
your doing any such bold
deeds.

Of deeds so daring done by thee,
Unferth,

25

And of sword-terror none; never
hath Breca

At the play of the battle, nor
either of you two,

Feat so fearless performèd with
weapons

Glinting and gleaming

. . .

. I
utter no boasting;

30

You are a slayer of
brothers, and will suffer
damnation, wise as you
may be.

Though with cold-
blooded cruelty thou killedst thy
brothers,

Thy nearest of kin; thou needs
must in hell get

Direful damnation, though
doughty thy wisdom.

I tell thee in earnest, offspring of
Ecglaf,

Never had Grendel such
numberless horrors,

35

The direful demon, done to thy
liegelord,

Harrying in Heorot, if thy heart
were as sturdy,

Thy mood as
ferocious as thou
dost describe
them.

Had your acts been as
brave as your words,
Grendel had not ravaged
your land so long.

He hath found out fully that the
fierce-burning hatred,

The edge-battle eager, of all of
your kindred,

40

Of the Victory-Scyldings, need
little dismay him:

Oaths he exacteth, not any he
spares

Of the folk of the Danemen, but
fighteth with pleasure,

The monster is not afraid
of the Danes,

Killeth and feasteth, no contest
expecteth

From Spear-Danish people. But
the prowess and valor

but he will soon learn to
dread the Geats.

45

Of the earls of the Geatmen early
shall venture

To give him a grapple. He shall
go who is able

Bravely to banquet, when the
bright-light of
morning

Which the second
day bringeth, the

On the second day, any
warrior may go
unmolested to the mead-
banquet.

sun in its ether-robés,

O'er children of men shines from
the southward!"

50

Then the gray-haired, war-famed
giver of treasure

Was blithesome
and joyous, the
Bright-Danish ruler

Hrothgar's spirits are
revived.

Expected assistance; the people's
protector

Heard from
Beowulf his bold
resolution.

The old king trusts
Beowulf. The heroes are
joyful.

There was laughter of heroes;
loud was the clatter,

55

The words were winsome.

Wealhtheow
advanced then,

Queen Wealhtheow plays
the hostess.

Consort of
Hrothgar, of courtesy mindful,
Gold-decked saluted the men in
the building,

And the freeborn woman the
beaker presented

To the lord of the
kingdom, first of
the East-Danes,

She offers the cup to her
husband first.

60

Bade him be blithesome when
beer was a-flowing,

Lief to his liegemen; he lustily
tasted

Of banquet and beaker, battle-
famed ruler.

The Helmingish lady then
graciously circled

'Mid all the liegemen lesser and
greater:

65

She gives presents to the
heroes.

Treasure-cups
tendered, till time was afforded

That the decorous-mooded,
diademed folk-
queen

Then she offers the cup to
Beowulf, thanking God
that aid has come.

Might bear to
Beowulf the
bumper o'errunning;

She greeted the Geat-prince, God
she did thank,

Most wise in her words, that her
wish was accomplished,

70

That in any of earlmen she ever
should look for

Solace in sorrow. He accepted the
beaker,

Battle-bold warrior, at
Wealththeow's
giving,

Then equipped for
combat quoth he
in measures,

Beowulf states to the
queen the object of his
visit.

Beowulf spake, offspring of
Ecgtheow:

75

“I purposed in spirit when I
mounted the ocean,

When I boarded I determined to do or die.
my boat with a band of my
liegemen,

I would work to the fullest the
will of your people

Or in foe's-clutches fastened fall
in the battle.

Deeds I shall do of daring and
prowess,

80

Or the last of my life-days live in
this mead-hall.”

These words to the lady were
welcome and pleasing,

The boast of the Geatman; with
gold trappings broidered

Went the freeborn folk-queen her
fond-lord to sit by.

Then again as of Glee is high.
yore was heard in the building

85

Courtly discussion, conquerors'
shouting,

Heroes were happy, till
Healfdene's son would

Go to his slumber to seek for
refreshing;

For the horrid hell-monster in
the hall-building knew he

A fight was determined,^a since
the light of the sun they

90

No longer could see, and
lowering darkness

O'er all had descended, and dark
under heaven

Shadowy shapes came shying
around them.

The liegemen all Hrothgar retires, leaving
rose then. One Beowulf in charge of the
saluted the other, hall.

Hrothgar Beowulf, in rhythmical
measures,

95

Wishing him well, and, the
wassail-hall giving

To his care and keeping, quoth he
departing:

“Not to any one else have I ever
entrusted,

But thee and thee only, the hall of
the Danemen,

Since high I could heave my hand
and my buckler.

100

Take thou in charge now the
noblest of houses;

Be mindful of honor, exhibiting
prowess,

Watch 'gainst the foeman! Thou
shalt want no enjoyments,

Survive thou safely adventure so
glorious!”

[1] The repetition of 'hwæðere' (574 and 578) is regarded by some scholars as a defect. B. suggests 'swá Þær' for the first: *So there it befell me, etc.* Another suggestion is to change the second 'hwæðere' into 'swá Þær': *So there I escaped with my life, etc.*

[2] Kl. suggests a period after 'determined.' This would give the passage as follows: *Since they no longer could see the light of the sun, and lowering darkness was down over all, dire under the heavens shadowy beings came going around them.*

XI.

ALL SLEEP SAVE ONE.

Hrothgar retires.

Then Hrothgar departed, his
earl-throng attending him,
Folk-lord of Scyldings, forth from
the building;

The war-chieftain wished then
Wealhtheow to look for,

The queen for a bedmate. To
keep away Grendel

5 God has provided a watch
for the hall.

The Glory of Kings
had given a hall-watch,

As men heard recounted: for the
king of the Danemen

He did special service, gave the
giant a watcher:

And the prince of the Geatmen
implicitly trusted

His warlike Beowulf is self-confident
strength and the Wielder's
protection.

10 He prepares for rest.

His armor of iron
off him he did then,

His helmet from his head, to his
henchman committed

His chased-handled chain-sword,
choicest of weapons,

And bade him bide with his
battle-equipments.

The good one then uttered words
of defiance,

Beowulf Geatman, ere his bed he
upmounted:

“I hold me no meaner in matters
of prowess,

Beowulf boasts of his
ability to cope with
Grendel.

In warlike achievements, than
Grendel does himself;

Hence I seek not with sword-
edge to sooth him to slumber,

Of life to bereave him, though
well I am able.

No battle-skill has he, that blows he should strike
me,

We will fight with
nature's weapons only.

To shatter my shield, though sure
he is mighty

In strife and destruction; but
struggling by night we

Shall do without edges, dare he
to look for

Weaponless warfare, and wise-
mooded Father

25

The glory apportion, God ever-
holy,

On which hand
soever to him
seemeth proper.”

God may decide who
shall conquer

Then the brave-mooded hero
bent to his slumber,

The pillow received the cheek of
the noble;

And many a
martial mere-
thane attending

The Geatish warriors lie
down.

30

Sank to his slumber. Seemed it
unlikely

That ever
thereafter any
should hope to

They thought it very
unlikely that they should
ever see their homes
again.

Be happy at home, hero-friends
visit

Or the lordly troop-castle where
he lived from his childhood;

They had heard how slaughter
had snatched from the wine-hall,

35

Had recently ravished, of the race
of the Scyldings

Too many by far. But God raised up a
deliverer.
But the Lord to
them granted

The weaving of war-speed, to
Wederish heroes

Aid and comfort, that every
opponent

By one man's war-might they
worsted and
vanquished,

God rules the world.

40

By the might of himself; the truth
is established

That God Almighty hath
governed for ages

Kindreds and nations. A night
very lurid

The trav'ler-at- Grendel comes to Heorot.

twilight came tramping and
striding.

The warriors were sleeping who
should watch the horned-
building,

45

Only one warrior is
awake.

One only excepted.

'Mid earthmen 'twas 'stablished,

Th' implacable foeman was
powerless to hurl them

To the land of shadows, if the
Lord were unwilling;

But serving as warder, in terror
to foemen,

He angrily bided the issue of
battle.²

[1] Gr. understood 'gódra' as meaning 'advantages in battle.' This rendering H.-So. rejects. The latter takes the

passage as meaning that Grendel, though mighty and formidable, has no skill in the art of war.

[2] B. in his masterly articles on Beowulf (P. and B. XII.) rejects the division usually made at this point, 'Þá.' (711), usually rendered 'then,' he translates 'when,' and connects its clause with the foregoing sentence. These changes he makes to reduce the number of 'cóm's' as principal verbs. (Cf. 703, 711, 721.) With all deference to this acute scholar, I must say that it seems to me that the poet is exhausting his resources to bring out clearly the supreme event on which the whole subsequent action turns. First, he (Grendel) came *in the wan night*; second, he came *from the moor*; third, he came *to the hall*. Time, place from which, place to which, are all given.

XII.

GRENDEL AND BEOWULF.

Grendel comes from the
fens.

'Neath the cloudy
cliffs came from the moor then
Grendel going, God's anger bare
he.

The monster intended some one
of earthmen

In the hall-building grand to
entrap and make
way with:

He goes towards the
joyous building.

5

He went under welkin where well
he knew of

The wine-joyous building,
brilliant with plating,

Gold-hall of earthmen. Not the
earliest occasion

He the home and This was not his first visit
there.
manor of Hrothgar
had sought:

Ne'er found he in life-days later
nor earlier

10

Hardier hero, hall-thanes¹ more
sturdy!

Then came to the building the
warrior marching,

Bereft of his His horrid fingers tear
the door open.
joyance. The door
quickly opened

On fire-hinges fastened, when his
fingers had touched it;

The fell one had flung then—his
fury so bitter—

15

Open the entrance. Early
thereafter

The foeman trod the shining hall-
pavement,

Strode he angrily; He strides furiously into
the hall.
from the eyes of
him glimmered

A lustre unlovely likest to fire.

He beheld in the hall the heroes
in numbers,

20

A circle of kinsmen sleeping
together,

A throng of He exults over his
supposed prey.
thanemen: then

his thoughts were exultant,

He minded to sunder from each
of the thanemen

The life from his body, horrible
demon,

Ere morning came, since fate had
allowed him

25

The prospect of
plenty. Providence
willed not

Fate has decreed that he
shall devour no more
heroes. Beowulf suffers
from suspense.

To permit him any more of men
under heaven

To eat in the night-time.

Higelac's kinsman

Great sorrow endured how the
dire-mooded creature

In unlooked-for assaults were
likely to bear him.

30

No thought had the monster of
deferring the
matter,

Grendel immediately
seizes a sleeping warrior,
and devours him.

But on earliest
occasion he
quickly laid hold of

A soldier asleep, suddenly tore
him,

Bit his bone-prison, the blood
drank in currents,

Swallowed in mouthfuls: he soon
had the dead man's

35

Feet and hands, too, eaten
entirely.

Nearer he strode then, the stout-
hearted warrior

Snatched as he Beowulf and Grendel
grapple.
slumbered, seizing
with hand-grip,

Forward the foeman foined with
his hand;

Caught he quickly the cunning
deviser,

40

On his elbow he rested. This
early discovered

The master of malice, that in
middle-earth's regions,

'Neath the whole of the heavens,
no hand-grapple greater

In any man else
had he ever
encountered:

The monster is amazed at
Beowulf's strength.

Fearful in spirit, faint-mooded
waxed he,

45

Not off could betake him; death
he was pondering,

Would fly to his
covert, seek the devils' assembly:

He is anxious to flee.

His calling no more was the same
he had followed

Long in his lifetime. The liege-
kinsman worthy

Of Higelac minded
his speech of the
evening,

Beowulf recalls his boast
of the evening, and
determines to fulfil it.

50

Stood he up straight and stoutly
did seize him.

His fingers crackled; the giant
was outward,

The earl stepped farther. The
famous one minded

To flee away farther, if he found
an occasion,

And off and away, avoiding delay,

55

To fly to the fen-moors; he fully
was ware of

The strength of his grapple in the
grip of the foeman.

'Twas an ill-taken
journey that the
injury-bringing,

'Twas a luckless day for
Grendel.

Harrying harmer to Heorot
wandered:

The palace re- The hall groans.
echoed; to all of the Danemen,

60

Dwellers in castles, to each of the
bold ones,

Earlmen, was terror. Angry they
both were,

Archwarders raging.² Rattled the
building;

'Twas a marvellous wonder that
the wine-hall withstood then

The bold-in-battle, bent not to
earthward,

65

Excellent earth-hall; but within
and without it

Was fastened so firmly in fetters
of iron,

By the art of the armorer. Off
from the sill there

Bent mead-benches many, as
men have informed me,

Adorned with gold-work, where
the grim ones did struggle.

70

The Scylding wise men weened
ne'er before

That by might and main-strength
a man under heaven

Might break it in pieces, bone-
decked, resplendent,

Crush it by cunning, unless
clutch of the fire

In smoke should consume it. The
sound mounted
upward

Grendel's cries terrify the
Danes.

75

Novel enough; on the North
Danes fastened

A terror of anguish, on all of the
men there

Who heard from the wall the
weeping and plaining,

The song of defeat from the
foeman of heaven,

Heard him hymns of horror
howl, and his sorrow

80

Hell-bound bewailing. He held
him too firmly

Who was strongest of main-
strength of men of that era.

[1] B. and t.B. emend so as to make lines 9 and 10 read: *Never in his life, earlier or later, had he, the hell-thane, found a braver hero.*—They argue that Beowulf's companions had done nothing to merit such encomiums as the usual readings allow them.

[2] For 'réðe rén-weardas' (771), t.B. suggests 'réðe, rénhearde.' Translate: *They were both angry, raging and mighty.*

XIII.

GRENDEL IS VANQUISHED.

Beowulf has no idea of
letting Grendel live.

For no cause
whatever would the earlmen's
defender

Leave in life-joys the loathsome
newcomer,

He deemed his existence utterly
useless

To men under heaven. Many a
noble

5

Of Beowulf brandished his battle-
sword old,

Would guard the life of his lord
and protector,

The far-famous chieftain, if able
to do so;

While waging the warfare, this
wist they but little,

Brave battle-thanes, while his
body intending

10

To slit into slivers,
and seeking his
spirit:

No weapon would harm
Grendel; he bore a
charmed life.

That the relentless foeman nor
finest of weapons

Of all on the earth, nor any of
war-bills

Was willing to injure; but
weapons of victory

Swords and suchlike he had
sworn to dispense with.

15

His death at that time must prove
to be wretched,

And the far-away spirit widely
should journey

Into enemies' power. This plainly
he saw then

Who with mirth^u of mood malice
no little

Had wrought in the past on the
race of the earthmen

20

(To God he was hostile), that his
body would fail him,

But Higelac's hardy henchman
and kinsman

Held him by the hand; hateful to
other

Was each one if
living. A body-
wound suffered

Grendel is sorely
wounded.

The direful demon, damage
incurable

25

His body bursts.

Was seen on his
shoulder, his sinews were
shivered,

His body did burst. To Beowulf
was given

Glory in battle; Grendel from
thenceward

Must flee and hide him in the
fen-cliffs and marshes,

Sick unto death, his dwelling
must look for

30

Unwinsome and woful; he wist
the more fully

The end of his
earthly existence
was nearing,

The monster flees away
to hide in the moors.

His life-days' limits. At last for
the Danemen,

When the slaughter was over,
their wish was accomplished.

The comer-from-far-land had
cleansed then of evil,

35

Wise and valiant, the war-hall of
Hrothgar,

Saved it from violence. He joyed
in the night-work,

In repute for prowess; the prince
of the Geatmen

For the East-Danish people his
boast had accomplished,

Bettered their burdensome bale-
sorrows fully,

40

The craft-begot evil they
erstwhile had suffered

And were forced to endure from
crushing oppression,

Their manifold misery. 'Twas a
manifest token,

When the hero-in-
battle the hand

Beowulf suspends
Grendel's hand and arm
in Heorot.

suspended,

The arm and the shoulder (there
was all of the claw

45

Of Grendel together) 'neath
great-stretching hall-roof.

[1] It has been proposed to translate 'myrðe' by *with sorrow*; but there seems no authority for such a rendering. To the present translator, the phrase 'módes myrðe' seems a mere padding for *gladly*; i.e., *he who gladly harassed mankind*.

XIV.

REJOICING OF THE DANES.

At early dawn, warriors
from far and near come
together to hear of the
night's adventures.

In the mist of the
morning many a
warrior

Stood round the gift-hall, as the
story is told me:

Folk-princes fared then from far
and from near

Through long-stretching
journeys to look at the wonder,

5
The footprints of the foeman.
Few of the
warriors

Few warriors lamented
Grendel's destruction.

Who gazed on the

foot-tracks of the inglorious
creature

His parting from life pained very
deeply,

How, weary in spirit, off from
those regions

In combats conquered he carried
his traces,

10

Fated and flying, to the flood of
the nickers.

There in bloody
billows bubbled
the currents,

Grendel's blood dyes the
waters.

The angry eddy was everywhere
mingled

And seething with gore, welling
with sword-blood;¹

He death-doomed had hid him,
when reaved of his joyance

15

He laid down his life in the lair
he had fled to,

His heathenish spirit, where hell
did receive him.

Thence the friends from of old
backward turned them,

And many a younker from merry
adventure,

Striding their stallions, stout
from the seaward,

20

Heroes on horses. There were
heard very often

Beowulf's praises; Beowulf is the hero of the
hour.
many often

asserted

That neither south nor north, in
the circuit of
waters,

He is regarded as a
probable successor to
Hrothgar.

O'er outstretching
earth-plain, none
other was better

'Mid bearers of war-shields, more
worthy to govern,

25

'Neath the arch of the ether. Not
any, however,

'Gainst the friend-lord muttered,
mocking-words
uttered

But no word is uttered to
derogate from the old
king

Of Hrothgar the
gracious (a good
king he).

Oft the famed ones permitted
their fallow-skinned horses

To run in rivalry, racing and
chasing,

30

Where the fieldways appeared to
them fair and inviting,

Known for their excellence; oft a
thane of the folk-
lord,²

The gleeman sings the
deeds of heroes.

³A man of
celebrity, mindful of rhythms,

Who ancient traditions treasured
in memory,

New word-groups found properly
bound:

35

The bard after 'gan then
Beowulf's venture

Wisely to tell of,
and words that
were clever

He sings in alliterative
measures of Beowulf's
prowess.

To utter skilfully, earnestly
speaking,

Everything told he that he heard
as to Sigmund's

Mighty
achievements,
many things
hidden,

Also of Sigemund, who
has slain a great fire-
dragon.

40

The strife of the Wælsing, the
wide-going ventures

The children of men knew of but
little,

The feud and the fury, but Fitela
with him,

When suchlike matters he
minded to speak of,

Uncle to nephew, as in every
contention

45

Each to other was ever devoted:

A numerous host of the race of
the scathers

They had slain with the sword-
edge. To Sigmund accrued then

No little of glory, when his life-
days were over,

Since he sturdy in struggle had
destroyed the great dragon,

50

The hoard-treasure's keeper;
'neath the hoar-grayish stone he,

The son of the atheling, unaided
adventured

The perilous project; not present
was Fitela,

Yet the fortune befell him of
forcing his weapon

Through the marvellous dragon,
that it stood in the wall,

55

Well-honored weapon; the worm
was slaughtered.

The great one had gained then by
his glorious achievement

To reap from the ring-hoard
richest enjoyment,

As best it did please him: his
vessel he loaded,

Shining ornaments on the ship's
bosom carried,

60

Kinsman of Wæls: the drake in
heat melted.

He was farthest
famed of fugitive
pilgrims,

Sigemund was widely
famed.

Mid wide-scattered world-folk,
for works of great prowess,

War-troopers' shelter: hence
waxed he in
honor.⁴

Heremod, an unfortunate
Danish king, is
introduced by way of
contrast.

Afterward
Heremod's hero-

strength failed him,

65

His vigor and valor. 'Mid
venomous haters

To the hands of foemen he was
fouly delivered,

Offdriven early.

Agony-billows

Oppressed him too long, to his people
he became then,

Unlike Sigemund and
Beowulf, Heremod was a
burden to his people.

To all the athelings, an ever-great
burden;

70

And the daring one's journey in
days of yore

Many wise men were wont to
deplore,

Such as hoped he would bring
them help in their sorrow,

That the son of their ruler should
rise into power,

Holding the headship held by his
fathers,

75

Should govern the people, the
gold-hoard and borough,

The kingdom of heroes, the
realm of the
Scyldings.

Beowulf is an honor to
his race.

He to all men
became then far more beloved,
Higelac's kinsman, to kindreds
and races,

To his friends much dearer; him
malice assaulted.—

Oft running and
racing on roadsters they
measured

The dun-colored highways. Then
the light of the morning

Was hurried and hastened. Went
henchmen in numbers

To the beautiful building, bold
ones in spirit,

To look at the wonder; the
liegelord himself then

85

From his wife-bower wending,
warden of treasures,

Glorious trod with troopers
unnumbered,

Famed for his virtues, and with
him the queen-wife

Measured the mead-ways, with
maidens attending.

[1] S. emends, suggesting ‘déop’ for ‘déog,’ and removing semicolon after ‘wéol.’ The two half-lines ‘welling ... hid him’ would then read: *The bloody deep welled with sword-gore.* B. accepts ‘déop’ for ‘déog,’ but reads ‘déað-fæges’: *The deep boiled with the sword-gore of the death-doomed one.*

[2] Another and quite different rendering of this passage is as follows: *Oft a liegeman of the king, a fame-covered man mindful of songs, who very many ancient traditions remembered (he found other word-groups accurately bound together) began afterward to tell of Beowulf’s adventure, skilfully to narrate it, etc.*

[3] Might ‘guma gilp-hladen’ mean ‘a man laden with boasts of the deeds of others’?

[4] t.B. accepts B.’s ‘hé þæs áron þáh’ as given by H.-So., but puts a comma after ‘þáh,’ and takes ‘siððan’ as introducing a dependent clause: *He throve in honor since Heremod’s strength ... had decreased.*

XV.

HROTHGAR'S GRATITUDE.

Hrothgar discoursed (to the hall-
building went he,

He stood by the pillar,¹ saw the
steep-rising hall-roof

Gleaming with gold-gems, and
Grendel his hand
there):

Hrothgar gives thanks for
the overthrow of the
monster.

“For the sight we
behold now,
thanks to the Wielder

5
Early be offered! Much evil I
bided,

Snaring from Grendel:² God can
e'er 'complish

Wonder on wonder, Wielder of
Glory!

But lately I
reckoned ne'er
under heaven

I had given up all hope,
when this brave liegeman
came to our aid.

Comfort to gain me for any of
sorrows,

10

While the handsomest of houses
horrid with bloodstain

Gory uptowered; grief had
offfrightened³

Each of the wise ones who
weened not that ever

The folk-troop's defences 'gainst
foes they should strengthen,

'Gainst sprites and monsters.

Through the might of the Wielder

A doughty retainer hath a deed
now accomplished

Which erstwhile we all with our
excellent wisdom

Failed to perform. If his mother yet liveth,
well may she thank God
for this son.
May affirm very
truly

What woman soever in all of the
nations

Gave birth to the child, if yet she
surviveth,

That the long-ruling Lord was
lavish to herward

In the birth of the bairn. Now,
Beowulf dear,

Most excellent
hero, I'll love thee
in spirit

Hereafter, Beowulf, thou
shalt be my son.

As bairn of my body; bear well
henceforward

The relationship new. No lack
shall befall thee

25

Of earth-joys any I ever can give
thee.

Full often for lesser service I've
given

Hero less hardy hoard-treasure
precious,

To a weaker in
war-strife. By
works of distinction

Thou hast won immortal
distinction.

Thou hast gained for thyself now
that thy glory shall flourish

30

Forever and ever. The All-Ruler
quite thee

With good from His hand as He
hitherto did thee!”

Beowulf answered, Beowulf replies: I was
most happy to render
thee this service.
Ecgtheow’s
offspring:

“That labor of glory most gladly
achieved we,

The combat accomplished,
unquailing we ventured

35

The enemy’s grapple; I would
grant it much rather

Thou wert able to look at the
creature in person,

Faint unto falling, the foe in his
trappings!

On murder-bed quickly I minded
to bind him,

With firm-holding fetters, that
forced by my grapple

40

Low he should lie in life-and-
death struggle

'Less his body escape; I was
wholly unable,

Since God did not will it, to keep him
from going,

I could not keep the
monster from escaping,
as God did not will that I
should.

Not held him that firmly, hated
opposer;

Too swift was the foeman. Yet
safety regarding

45

He suffered his hand behind him
to linger,

His arm and shoulder, to act as
watcher;

No shadow of
solace the woe-
begone creature

He left his hand and arm
behind.

Found him there nathless: the
hated destroyer

Liveth no longer, lashed for his
evils,

50

But sorrow hath seized him, in
snare-meshes hath him

Close in its clutches, keepeth him
writhing

In baleful bonds: there banished
for evil

The man shall wait for the
mighty tribunal,

How the God of
glory shall give
him his earnings.”

God will give him his
deserts.

55

Then the soldier kept silent, son
of old Ecglaf,

From boasting and
bragging of battle-
achievements,

Unferth has nothing
more to say, for Beowulf's
actions speak louder than
words.

Since the princes beheld there
the hand that depended

'Neath the lofty hall-timbers by
the might of the nobleman,

Each one before him, the enemy's
fingers;

60

Each finger-nail strong steel
most resembled,

The heathen one's hand-spur, the
hero-in-battle's

Claw most uncanny; quoth they
agreeing,

That not any
excellent edges of
brave ones

No sword will harm the
monster.

Was willing to touch him, the
terrible creature's

65

Battle-hand bloody to bear away from him.

[1] B. and t.B. read 'stapole,' and translate *stood on the floor*.

[2] For 'snaring from Grendel,' 'sorrows at Grendel's hands' has been suggested. This gives a parallel to 'láðes.' 'Grynna' may well be gen. pl. of 'gyrn,' by a scribal slip.

[3] The H.-So punctuation has been followed; but B. has been followed in understanding 'gehwylcne' as object of 'wíd-scofen (hæfde).' Gr. construes 'wéa' as nom abs.

XVI.

HROTHGAR LAVISHES GIFTS UPON HIS DELIVERER.

Heorot is adorned with
hands.

Then straight was
ordered that Heorot inside¹

With hands be embellished: a
host of them gathered,

Of men and women, who the
wassailing-building

The guest-hall be geared. Gold-
flashing sparkled

5

Webs on the walls then, of
wonders a many

To each of the heroes that look
on such objects.

The beautiful
building was
broken to pieces

The hall is defaced,
however.

Which all within with irons was
fastened,

Its hinges torn off: only the roof
was

10

Whole and uninjured when the
horrible creature

Outlawed for evil off had betaken
him,

Hopeless of living. 'Tis hard to
avoid it

(Whoever will do
it!); but he
doubtless must come to

[A vague passage of five
verses.]

2

The place awaiting, as Wyrð hath
appointed,

15

Soul-bearers, earth-dwellers,
earls under heaven,

Where bound on its bed his body
shall slumber

When feasting is finished. Full was
the time then

Hrothgar goes to the
banquet.

That the son of Healfdene went
to the building;

The excellent atheling would eat
of the banquet.

20

Ne'er heard I that people with
hero-band larger

Bare them better tow'rds their
bracelet-bestower.

The laden-with-glory stooped to
the bench then

(Their kinsmen-companions in
plenty were joyful,

Many a cupful quaffing
complaisantly),

25

Doughty of spirit in the high-
tow'ring palace,

Hrothgar and
Hrothulf. Heorot
then inside

Hrothgar's nephew,
Hrothulf, is present.

Was filled with friendly ones;
falsehood and treachery

The Folk-Scyldings now nowise
did practise.

Then the offspring of Healfdene
offered to Beowulf

Hrothgar lavishes gifts
upon Beowulf.

30

A golden standard, as reward for
the victory,

A banner embossed, burnie and
helmet;

Many men saw then a song-
famous weapon

Borne 'fore the hero. Beowulf
drank of

The cup in the building; that
treasure-bestowing

35

He needed not blush for in
battle-men's presence.

Ne'er heard I that Four handsomer gifts
many men on the were never presented.
ale-bench

In friendlier fashion to their
fellows presented

Four bright jewels with gold-
work embellished.

'Round the roof of the helmet a
head-guarder outside

40

Braided with wires, with bosses
was furnished,

That swords-for-the-battle fight-
hardened might fail

Boldly to harm him, when the
hero proceeded

Forth against
foemen. The
defender of earls
then

Hrothgar commands that
eight finely caparisoned
steeds be brought to
Beowulf.

Commanded that eight steeds
with bridles

45

Gold-plated, gleaming, be guided
to hallward,

Inside the building; on one of
them stood then

An art-broidered saddle
embellished with jewels;

'Twas the sovereign's seat, when
the son of King Healfdene

Was pleased to take part in the
play of the edges;

50

The famous one's valor ne'er
failed at the front when

Slain ones were bowing. And to
Beowulf granted

The prince of the Ingwins, power
over both,

O'er war-steeds and weapons;
bade him well to enjoy them.

In so manly a manner the
mighty-famed chieftain,

55

Hoard-ward of heroes, with
horses and jewels

War-storms requited, that none
e'er condemneth

Who willeth to tell truth with full
justice.

[1] Kl. suggests 'hroden' for 'háten,' and renders: *Then quickly was Heorot adorned within, with hands bedecked.*—B. suggests 'gefrætwon' instead of 'gefrætwod,' and renders: *Then was it commanded to adorn Heorot within quickly with hands.*—The former has the advantage of affording a parallel to 'gefrætwod': both have the disadvantage of altering the text.

[2] The passage 1005-1009 seems to be hopeless. One difficult point is to find a subject for 'gesacan.' Some say 'he'; others supply 'each,' *i.e., every soul-bearer ... must gain the inevitable place.* The genitives in this case are partitive.—If 'he' be subj., the genitives are dependent on 'gearwe' (= prepared).—The 'he' itself is disputed, some referring it to Grendel; but B. takes it as involved in the parenthesis.

XVII.

BANQUET (*CONTINUED*).—THE SCOP'S SONG OF FINN AND HNÆF.

And the atheling Each of Beowulf's
of earlmen to each companions receives a
of the heroes costly gift.

Who the ways of the waters went
with Beowulf,

A costly gift-token gave on the
mead-bench,

Offered an heirloom, and ordered
that that man

5 The warrior killed by
With gold should Grendel is to be paid for
be paid for, whom in gold.
Grendel had erstwhile

Wickedly slaughtered, as he more
of them had done

Had far-seeing God and the
mood of the hero

The fate not averted: the Father
then governed

All of the earth-dwellers, as He
ever is doing;

10

Hence insight for all men is
everywhere fittest,

Forethought of spirit! much he
shall suffer

Of lief and of loathsome who long
in this present

Useth the world in this woful
existence.

There was music and merriment
mingling together

15

Hrothgar's scop recalls
events in the reign of his
lord's father.

Touching
Healfdene's
leader; the joy-wood was
fingered,

Measures recited, when the
singer of Hrothgar

On mead-bench should mention
the merry hall-joyance

Of the kinsmen of Finn, when
onset surprised
them:

Hnæf, the Danish
general, is treacherously
attacked while staying at
Finn's castle.

“The Half-Danish
hero, Hnæf of the
Scyldings,

20

On the field of the Frisians was
fated to perish.

Sure Hildeburg needed not
mention approving

The faith of the Jutemen: though
blameless entirely,

When shields were
shivered she was
shorn of her
darlings,

Queen Hildeburg is not
only wife of Finn, but a
kinswoman of the
murdered Hnæf.

Of bairns and brothers: they bent
to their fate

25

With war-spear wounded; woe
was that woman.

Not causeless lamented the
daughter of Hoce

The decree of the Wielder when
morning-light came and

She was able 'neath heaven to
behold the destruction

Of brothers and bairns, where
the brightest of
earth-joys

Finn's force is almost
exterminated.

30

She had hitherto had: all the
henchmen of Finn

War had oftaken, save a handful
remaining,

That he nowise was able to offer
resistance¹

To the onset of
Hengest in the
parley of battle,

Hengest succeeds Hnæf
as Danish general.

Nor the wretched remnant to
rescue in war from

35

The earl of the atheling; but they
offered conditions,

Another great
building to fully
make ready,

Compact between the
Frisians and the Danes.

A hall and a high-seat, that half
they might rule with

The sons of the Jutemen, and
that Folcwalda's son would

Day after day the Danemen
honor

40

When gifts were giving, and grant
of his ring-store

To Hengest's earl-troop ever so
freely,

Of his gold-plated jewels, as he
encouraged the
Frisians

Equality of gifts agreed
on.

On the bench of
the beer-hall. On both sides they
swore then

A fast-binding compact; Finn
unto Hengest

45

With no thought of revoking
vowed then most solemnly

The woe-begone remnant well to
take charge of,

His Witan advising; the
agreement should no one

By words or works weaken and
shatter,

By artifice ever injure its value,

50

Though reaved of their ruler their
ring-giver's slayer

They followed as vassals, Fate so
requiring:

Then if one of the No one shall refer to old
grudges.
Frisians the
quarrel should speak of

In tones that were taunting,
terrible edges

Should cut in requital.
Accomplished the oath was,

55

And treasure of gold from the
hoard was uplifted.

The best of the
Scylding braves
was then fully

Danish warriors are
burned on a funeral-pyre.

Prepared for the pile; at the pyre
was seen clearly

The blood-gory burnie, the boar
with his gilding,

The iron-hard swine, athelings
many

60

Fatally wounded; no few had
been slaughtered.

Hildeburg bade then, at the
burning of Hnæf,

The bairn of her
bosom to bear to

Queen Hildeburg has her
son burnt along with
Hnæf.

the fire,

That his body be burned and
borne to the pyre.

The woe-stricken woman wept on
his shoulder,²

65

In measures lamented;
upmounted the hero.³

The greatest of dead-fires curled
to the welkin,

On the hill's-front crackled;
heads were a-melting,

Wound-doors bursting, while the
blood was a-coursing

From body-bite fierce. The fire
devoured them,

70

Greediest of spirits, whom war
had offcarried

From both of the peoples; their
bravest were fallen.

[1] For 1084, R. suggests 'wiht Hengeste wið gefeohtan.'—K. suggests 'wið Hengeste wiht gefeohtan.' Neither emendation would make any essential change in the translation.

[2] The separation of adjective and noun by a phrase (cf. v. 1118) being very unusual, some scholars have put 'earme on eaxle' with the foregoing lines, inserting a semicolon after 'eaxe.' In this case 'on eaxe' (*i.e.*, on the ashes, cinders) is sometimes read, and this affords a parallel to 'on bæl.' Let us hope that a satisfactory rendering shall yet be reached without resorting to any tampering with the text, such as Lichtenheld proposed: 'earme ides on eaxe gnornode.'

[3] For 'gúð-rinc,' 'gúð-réc,' *battle-smoke*, has been suggested.

XVIII.

THE FINN EPISODE (CONTINUED).—THE BANQUET CONTINUES.

“Then the warriors The survivors go to
Friesland, the home of
Finn.
departed to go to
their dwellings,

Reaved of their friends, Friesland
to visit,

Their homes and high-city.

Hengest continued

Biding with Finn Hengest remains there all
winter, unable to get
away.
the blood-tainted
winter,

5

Wholly unsundered; ¹ of
fatherland thought he

Though unable to drive the ring-
stemmèd vessel

O'er the ways of the waters; the
wave-deeps were tossing,

Fought with the wind; winter in
ice-bonds

Closed up the currents, till there
came to the dwelling

10

A year in its course, as yet it
revolveth,

If season propitious one always
regardeth,

World-cheering weathers. Then
winter was gone,

Earth's bosom was lovely; the
exile would get him,

The guest from the He devises schemes of
vengeance.
palace; on
grewsomet vengeance

15

He brooded more eager than on
oversea journeys,

Whe'r onset-of-anger he were
able to 'complish,

The bairns of the Jutemen
therein to remember.

Nowise refused he the duties of
liegeman

When Hun of the Frisians the
battle-sword Láfing,

20

Fairest of falchions, friendly did
give him:

Its edges were famous in folk-talk
of Jutland.

And savage sword-fury seized in
its clutches

Bold-mooded Finn where he
bode in his palace,

When the Guthlaf and Oslaf
revenge Hnæf's
slaughter.
grewsome grapple
Guthlaf and Oslaf

25

Had mournfully mentioned, the
mere-journey over,

For sorrows half-blamed him;
the flickering spirit

Could not bide in his bosom.
Then the building
was covered²

Finn is slain.

With corpses of foemen, and
Finn too was slaughtered,

The king with his comrades, and
the queen made a
prisoner.

The jewels of Finn, and
his queen are carried
away by the Danes.

30

The troops of the
Scyldings bore to their vessels

All that the land-king had in his
palace,

Such trinkets and treasures they
took as, on searching,

At Finn's they could find. They
ferried to Daneland

The excellent woman on oversea
journey,

35

The lay is concluded, and
the main story is
resumed.

Led her to their land-folk.” The
lay was concluded,

The gleeman’s recital. Shouts
again rose then,

Bench-glee resounded, bearers
then offered

Wine from Skinkers carry round the
beaker.
wonder-vats.

Wealththeo advanced then

Going ’neath gold-crown, where
the good ones were seated

40 Queen Wealththeow
greet Hrothgar, as he
sits beside Hrothulf, his
nephew.
Uncle and
nephew; their
peace was yet mutual,

True each to the other. And
Unferth the spokesman

Sat at the feet of the lord of the
Scyldings:

Each trusted his spirit that his
mood was courageous,

Though at fight he had failed in
faith to his kinsmen.

45

Said the queen of the Scyldings:

“My lord and protector,

Treasure-bestower, take thou this
beaker;

Joyance attend thee, gold-friend
of heroes,

And greet thou the Be generous to the Geats.

Geatmen with gracious
responses!

So ought one to do. Be kind to
the Geatmen,

In gifts not niggardly; anear and
afar now

Peace thou enjoyest. Report hath
informed me

Thou'lt have for a bairn the
battle-brave hero.

Now is Heorot cleansèd, ring-
palace gleaming;

Give while thou
mayest many
rewards,

Have as much joy as
possible in thy hall, once
more purified.

And bequeath to thy kinsmen
kingdom and people,

On wending thy way to the
Wielder's splendor.

I know good Hrothulf, that the
noble young
troopers

I know that Hrothulf will
prove faithful if he
survive thee.

He'll care for and
honor, lord of the
Scyldings,

If earth-joys thou endest earlier
than he doth;

60

I reckon that recompense he'll
render with kindness

Our offspring and issue, if that all
he remember,

What favors of yore, when he yet
was an infant,

We awarded to him for his
worship and pleasure.”

Then she turned by the bench
where her sons were carousing,

65

Hrethric and Hrothmund, and
the heroes'
offspring,

Beowulf is sitting by the
two royal sons.

The war-youth
together; there the good one was
sitting

'Twiht the brothers twain,
Beowulf Geatman.

[1] For 1130 (1) R. and Gr. suggest 'elne unflitme' as 1098 (1) reads. The latter verse is undisputed; and, for the former, 'elne' would be as possible as 'ealles,' and 'unflitme' is well supported. Accepting 'elne unflitme' for both, I would suggest '*very peaceably*' for both places: (1) *Finn to Hengest very peaceably vowed with oaths*, etc. (2) *Hengest then still the slaughter-stained winter remained there with Finn very peaceably*. The two passages become thus correlatives, the second a sequel of the first. 'Elne,' in the sense of very (swiðe), needs no argument; and 'unflitme' (from 'flitan') can, it seems to me, be more plausibly rendered 'peaceful,' 'peaceable,' than 'contestable,' or 'conquerable.'

[2] Some scholars have proposed ‘roden’; the line would then read: *Then the building was reddened, etc.*, instead of ‘covered.’ The ‘h’ may have been carried over from the three alliterating ‘h’s.’

XIX.

BEOWULF RECEIVES FURTHER HONOR.

A beaker was
borne him, and
bidding to quaff it

More gifts are offered
Beowulf.

Graciously given, and gold that
was twisted

Pleasantly proffered, a pair of
arm-jewels,

Rings and corslet, of collars the
greatest

5

I've heard of 'neath heaven. Of
heroes not any

More splendid from jewels have I
heard 'neath the welkin,

Since Hama off
bore the
Brosingmen's
necklace,

A famous necklace is referred to, in comparison with the gems presented to Beowulf.

The bracteates and jewels, from
the bright-shining city,¹

Eormenric's cunning craftiness
fled from,

10

Chose gain everlasting. Geatish
Higelac,

Grandson of Swerting, last had
this jewel

When tramping 'neath banner
the treasure he guarded,

The field-spoil defended; Fate
offcarried him

When for deeds of daring he
endured tribulation,

15

Hate from the Frisians; the
ornaments bare he

O'er the cup of the currents,
costly gem-treasures,

Mighty folk-leader, he fell 'neath
his target;

The² corpse of the king then came
into charge of

The race of the Frankmen, the
mail-shirt and collar:

20

Warmen less noble plundered
the fallen,

When the fight was finished; the
folk of the Geatmen

The field of the dead held in
possession.

The choicest of mead-halls with
cheering resounded.

Wealththeo discoursed, the war-
troop addressed
she:

Queen Wealththeow
magnifies Beowulf's
achievements.

25

“This collar enjoy
thou, Beowulf worthy,

Young man, in safety, and use
thou this armor,

Gems of the people, and prosper
thou fully,

Show thyself sturdy and be to
these liegemen

Mild with instruction! I'll mind
thy requital.

Thou hast brought it to pass that
far and near

Forever and ever earthmen shall
honor thee,

Even so widely as ocean
surroundeth

The blustering bluffs. Be, while
thou livest,

A wealth-blessèd atheling. I wish
thee most truly

May gifts never fail thee.

Jewels and
treasure. Be kind to my son, thou

Living in joyance! Here each of
the nobles

Is true unto other, gentle in
spirit,

Loyal to leader. The liegemen are
peaceful,

The war-troops ready: well-
drunken heroes,³

40

Do as I bid ye.” Then she went to
the settle.

There was choicest of banquets,
wine drank the
heroes:

They little know of the
sorrow in store for them.

Weird they knew
not, destiny cruel,

As to many an earlman early it
happened,

When evening had come and
Hrothgar had parted

Off to his manor, the mighty to
slumber.

Warriors unnumbered warded
the building

As erst they did often: the ale-
settle bared they,

'Twas covered all over with beds
and pillows.

Doomed unto
death, down to his
slumber

A doomed thane is there
with them.

Bowed then a beer-thane. Their
battle-shields placed they,

Bright-shining targets, up by
their heads then;

O'er the atheling on ale-bench
'twas easy to see there

Battle-high helmet, burnie of
ring-mail,

And mighty war-
spear. 'Twas the
wont of that people

They were always ready
for battle.

55

To constantly keep them
equipped for the battle,⁴

At home or marching—in either
condition—

At seasons just such as necessity
ordered

As best for their ruler; that
people was worthy.

[1] C. suggests a semicolon after 'city,' with 'he' as supplied subject of 'fled' and 'chose.'

[2] For 'feorh' S. suggests 'feoh': 'corpse' in the translation would then be changed to 'possessions,' 'belongings.' This is a better reading than one joining, in such intimate syntactical relations, things so unlike as 'corpse' and 'jewels.'

[3] S. suggests '*wine-joyous heroes,*' '*warriors elated with wine.*'

[4] I believe this translation brings out the meaning of the poet, without departing seriously from the H.-So. text. 'Oft' frequently means 'constantly,' 'continually,' not always 'often.'—Why 'an (on) wíg gearwe' should be written 'ánwíg-gearwe' (= ready for single combat), I cannot see. 'Gearwe' occurs quite frequently with 'on'; cf. B. 1110 (*ready for the pyre*), El. 222 (*ready for the glad journey*). Moreover, what has the idea of single combat to do with B. 1247 ff.? The poet is giving an inventory of the arms and armor which they lay aside on retiring, and he closes his narration by saying that they were *always prepared for battle both at home and on the march.*

XX.

THE MOTHER OF GRENDEL.

They sank then to slumber. With
sorrow one paid for

His evening repose, as often
betid them

While Grendel was holding¹ the
gold-bedecked palace,

Ill-deeds performing, till his end
overtook him,

5

Death for his sins. 'Twas seen
very clearly,

Known unto earth-
folk, that still an
avenger

Grendel's mother is
known to be thirsting for
revenge.

Outlived the loathed one, long
since the sorrow

Caused by the struggle; the
mother of Grendel,

Devil-shaped woman, her woe
ever minded,

10

Who was held to inhabit the
horrible waters,

The cold-flowing currents, after

[Grendel's progenitor,
Cain, is again referred
to.]

Cain had become a

Slayer-with-edges to his one only
brother,

The son of his sire; he set out
then banished,

Marked as a murderer, man-joys
avoiding,

Lived in the desert. Thence
 demons
 unnumbered

The poet again magnifies
 Beowulf's valor.

Fate-sent awoke;
 one of them Grendel,

Sword-cursèd, hateful, who at
 Heorot met with

A man that was watching,
 waiting the struggle,

Where a horrid one held him
 with hand-grapple sturdy;

Nathless he minded the might of
 his body,

The glorious gift God had
 allowed him,

And folk-ruling Father's favor
relied on,

His help and His comfort: so he
conquered the foeman,

The hell-spirit humbled: he
unhappy departed then,

25

Reaved of his joyance, journeying
to death-haunts,

Foeman of man. His mother
moreover

Eager and gloomy Grendel's mother comes
to avenge her son.
was anxious to go
on

Her mournful mission, mindful
of vengeance

For the death of her son. She
came then to Heorot

Where the Armor-Dane earlmen
all through the building

Were lying in slumber. Soon
there became then

Return² to the nobles, when the
mother of Grendel

Entered the folk-hall; the fear
was less grievous

By even so much as the vigor of
maidens,

War-strength of women, by
warrior is reckoned,

When well-carved weapon,
worked with the hammer,

Blade very bloody, brave with its
edges,

Strikes down the boar-sign that
stands on the helmet.

Then the hard-edgèd weapon was
heaved in the building,³

40

The brand o'er the benches,
broad-lindens many

Hand-fast were lifted; for helmet
he recked not,

For armor-net broad, whom
terror laid hold of.

She went then hastily, outward
would get her

Her life for to save, when some
one did spy her;

45

Soon she had

grappled one of the athelings

She seizes a favorite
liegemen of Hrothgar's.

Fast and firmly, when fenward
she hied her;

That one to Hrothgar was liefest
of heroes

In rank of retainer where waters
encircle,

A mighty shield-warrior, whom
she murdered at slumber,

50

A broadly-famed battle-knight.
Beowulf was
absent,

Beowulf was asleep in
another part of the
palace.

But another
apartment was
erstwhile devoted

To the glory-decked Geatman
when gold was distributed.

There was hubbub in Heorot. The
hand that was famous

She grasped in its gore;⁴ grief was
renewed then

55

In homes and houses: 'twas no
happy arrangement

In both of the quarters to barter
and purchase

With lives of their friends. Then
the well-aged ruler,

The gray-headed war-thane, was
woful in spirit,

When his long-trusted liegeman
lifeless he knew of,

60

Beowulf is sent for.

His dearest one
gone. Quick from a room was

Beowulf brought, brave and
triumphant.

As day was dawning in the dusk
of the morning,

Went then that
earlman,
champion noble,

He comes at Hrothgar's
summons.

Came with comrades, where the
clever one bided

65

Whether God all gracious would
grant him a respite

After the woe he had suffered.
The war-worthy hero

With a troop of retainers trod
then the pavement

(The hall-building groaned), till
he greeted the wise one,

The earl of the Ingwins;⁵ asked if the night had

Beowulf inquires how
Hrothgar had enjoyed his
night's rest.

70

Fully refreshed him, as fain he would have it.

[1] Several eminent authorities either read or emend the MS. so as to make this verse read, *While Grendel was wasting the gold-bedecked palace*. So [2015](#) below: *ravaged the desert*.

[2] For 'sóna' (1281), t.B. suggests 'sára,' limiting 'edhwyrft.' Read then: *Return of sorrows to the nobles, etc*. This emendation supplies the syntactical gap after 'edhwyrft.'

[3] Some authorities follow Grein's lexicon in treating 'heard ecg' as an adj. limiting 'sweord': H.-So. renders it as a subst. (So v. 1491.) The sense of the translation would be the same.

[4] B. suggests 'under hróf genam' (v. 1303). This emendation, as well as an emendation with (?) to v. 739, he offers, because 'under' baffles him in both passages. All we need is to take 'under' in its secondary meaning of 'in,' which, though not given by Grein, occurs in the literature. Cf. Chron. 876 (March's A.-S. Gram. § 355) and Oro. Amaz. I. 10, where 'under' = *in the midst of*. Cf. modern Eng. 'in such circumstances,' which interchanges in good usage with 'under such circumstances.'

[5] For 'néod-laðu' (1321) C. suggests 'néad-láðum,' and translates: *asked whether the night had been pleasant to him after crushing-hostility*.

XXI.

HROTHGAR'S ACCOUNT OF THE MONSTERS.

Hrothgar rejoined, Hrothgar laments the death of Æschere, his shoulder-companion.
helm of the
Scyldings:

“Ask not of joyance! Grief is
renewed to

The folk of the Danemen. Dead is
Æschere,

Yrmenlaf's brother, older than
he,

5

My true-hearted counsellor,
trusty adviser,

Shoulder-companion, when
fighting in battle

Our heads we protected, when
troopers were
clashing,

He was my ideal hero.

And heroes were dashing; such
an earl should be ever,

An erst-worthy atheling, as
Æschere proved him.

10

The flickering death-spirit
became in Heorot

His hand-to-hand murderer; I
can not tell whither

The cruel one turned in the
carcass exulting,

By cramming
discovered.¹ The
quarrel she

This horrible creature
came to avenge Grendel's
death.

wreaked then,

That last night igone Grendel
thou killedst

15

In grewsomest manner, with
grim-holding clutches,

Since too long he had lessened
my liege-troop and wasted

My folk-men so foully. He fell in
the battle

With forfeit of life, and another
has followed,

A mighty crime-worker, her
kinsman avenging,

20

And henceforth hath 'stablished
her hatred unyielding,²

As it well may appear to many a
liegeman,

Who mourneth in spirit the
treasure-bestower,

Her heavy heart-sorrow; the
hand is now lifeless

Which³ availed you in every wish
that you
cherished.

25

Land-people heard

I, liegemen, this saying,

Dwellers in halls, they had seen
very often

A pair of such mighty march-
striding creatures,

Far-dwelling spirits, holding the
moorlands:

I have heard my vassals
speak of these two
uncanny monsters who
lived in the moors.

One of them wore, as well they
might notice,

30

The image of woman, the other
one wretched

In guise of a man wandered in
exile,

Except he was huger than any of
earthmen;

Earth-dwelling people entitled
him Grendel

In days of yore: they know not
their father,

35

Whe'r ill-going spirits any were
borne him

Ever before. They
guard the wolf-

The inhabit the most
desolate and horrible
places.

coverts,

Lands inaccessible, wind-beaten
nesses,

Fearfullest fen-deeps, where a
flood from the mountains

'Neath mists of the nesses
netherward rattles,

40

The stream under earth: not far
is it henceward

Measured by mile-lengths that
the mere-water standeth,

Which forests hang over, with
frost-whiting covered,⁴

A firm-rooted forest, the floods
overshadow.

There ever at night one an ill-
meaning portent

45

A fire-flood may see; 'mong
children of men

None liveth so wise that wot of
the bottom;

Though harassed by hounds the
heath-stepper seek
for,

Even the hounded deer
will not seek refuge in
these uncanny regions.

Fly to the forest,
firm-antlered he-
deer,

Spurred from afar, his spirit he
yieldeth,

50

His life on the shore, ere in he
will venture

To cover his head. Uncanny the
place is:

Thence upward ascendeth the
surging of waters,

Wan to the welkin, when the
wind is stirring

The weathers unpleasing, till the
air groweth
gloomy,

To thee only can I look
for assistance.

55

And the heavens lower. Now is
help to be gotten

From thee and thee only! The
abode thou know'st not,

The dangerous place where
thou'rt able to meet with

The sin-laden hero: seek if thou
darest!

For the feud I will fully fee thee
with money,

60

With old-time treasure, as
erstwhile I did thee,

With well-twisted jewels, if away
thou shalt get thee.”

[1] For ‘gefrægnod’ (1334), K. and t.B. suggest ‘gefægnod,’ rendering ‘*rejoicing in her fill.*’ This gives a parallel to ‘æse wlanc’ (1333).

[2] The line ‘And ... yielding,’ B. renders: *And she has performed a deed of blood-vengeance whose effect is far-reaching.*

[3] ‘Sé Þe’ (1345) is an instance of masc. rel. with fem. antecedent. So v. 1888, where ‘sé Þe’ refers to ‘yldo.’

[4] For ‘hrímge’ in the H.-So. edition, Gr. and others read ‘hrínde’ (=hrínende), and translate: *which rustling forests overhang.*

XXII.

BEOWULF SEEKS GRENDEL'S MOTHER.

Beowulf answered, Ecgtheow's
son:

“Grieve not, O Beowulf exhorts the old
wise one! for each king to arouse himself for
it is better, action.

His friend to avenge than with
vehemence wail him;

Each of us must the end-day
abide of

5

His earthly existence; who is able
accomplish

Glory ere death! To battle-thane
noble

Lifeless lying, 'tis at last most fitting.

Arise, O king, quick let us hasten
To look at the footprint of the
kinsman of Grendel!

10

I promise thee this now: to his
place he'll escape not,

To embrace of the earth, nor to
mountainous forest,

Nor to depths of the ocean,
wherever he wanders.

Practice thou now patient
endurance

Of each of thy sorrows, as I hope
for thee soothly!”

Hrothgar rouses himself.
His horse is brought.

Then up sprang
the old one, the All-Wielder
thanked he,

Ruler Almighty, that the man had
outspoken.

Then for Hrothgar a war-horse
was decked with a bridle,

Curly-maned courser. The clever
folk-leader

Stately proceeded: They start on the track of
the female monster.
stepped then an
earl-troop

Of linden-wood bearers. Her
footprints were seen then

Widely in wood-paths, her way
o'er the bottoms,

Where she faraway fared o'er fen-
country murky,

Bore away breathless the best of
retainers

Who pondered with Hrothgar the
welfare of country.

25

The son of the athelings then
went o'er the stony,

Declivitous cliffs, the close-
covered passes,

Narrow passages, paths
unfrequented,

Nesses abrupt, nicker-haunts
many;

One of a few of wise-mooded
heroes,

30

He onward advanced to view the
surroundings,

Till he found unawares woods of
the mountain

O'er hoar-stones hanging, holt-
wood unjoyful;

The water stood under, welling
and gory.

'Twas irksome in spirit to all of
the Danemen,

35

Friends of the Scyldings, to many
a liegeman

Sad to be suffered, The sight of Æschere's
head causes them great
sorrow.
a sorrow unlittle

To each of the earlmen, when to
Æschere's head they

Came on the cliff. The current
was seething

With blood and with gore (the
troopers gazed on it).

40

The horn anon sang the battle-
song ready.

The troop were all seated; they
saw 'long the
water then

Many a serpent,
mere-dragons
wondrous

The water is filled with
serpents and sea-
dragons.

Trying the waters, nickers a-lying
On the cliffs of the nesses, which
at noonday full often

45

Go on the sea-deeps their
sorrowful journey,

Wild-beasts and wormkind; away
then they hastened

Hot-mooded, One of them is killed by
Beowulf.
hateful, they heard
the great clamor,

The war-trumpet winding. One
did the Geat-prince

Sunder from earth-joys, with
arrow from bowstring,

50

From his sea-struggle tore him,
that the trusty
war-missile

The dead beast is a poor
swimmer

Pierced to his
vitals; he proved in the currents

Less doughty at swimming whom
death had offcarried.

Soon in the waters the wonderful
swimmer

Was straitened most sorely with
sword-pointed boar-spears,

55

Pressed in the battle and pulled
to the cliff-edge;

The liegemen then looked on the
loath-fashioned
stranger.

Beowulf prepares for a
struggle with the
monster.

Beowulf donned
then his battle-
equipments,

Cared little for life; inlaid and
most ample,

The hand-woven corslet which
could cover his body,

60

Must the wave-deeps explore,
that war might be powerless

To harm the great hero, and the
hating one's grasp might

Not peril his safety; his head was
protected

By the light-flashing helmet that
should mix with the bottoms,

Trying the eddies, treasure-
emblazoned,

65

Encircled with jewels, as in
seasons long past

The weapon-smith worked it,
wondrously made it,

With swine-bodies fashioned it,
that thenceforward no longer

Brand might bite it, and battle-
sword hurt it.

And that was not least of helpers
in prowess

70

He has Unferth's sword
in his hand.

That Hrothgar's
spokesman had lent him when
straitened;

And the hilted hand-sword was
Hrunting entitled,

Old and most excellent 'mong all
of the treasures;

Its blade was of iron, blotted with
poison,

Hardened with gore; it failed not
in battle

Any hero under heaven in hand
 who it brandished,

Who ventured to take the terrible
 journeys,

The battle-field sought; not the
 earliest occasion

That deeds of daring 'twas
 destined to
 'complish.

Unferth has little use for
 swords.

Ecglaf's kinsman
 minded not soothly,

Exulting in strength, what erst he
 had spoken

Drunken with wine, when the
 weapon he lent to

A sword-hero bolder; himself did
not venture

'Neath the strife of the currents
his life to endanger,

To fame-deeds perform; there he
forfeited glory,

85

Repute for his strength. Not so
with the other

When he clad in his corslet had
equipped him for battle.

Good over-measure, enjoyed him
while able.

15

And the ancient heirloom
Unferth permit thou,

The famed one to have, the
heavy-sword splendid¹

The hard-edgèd weapon; with
Hrunting to aid me,

I shall gain me glory, or grim-
death shall take
me.”

Beowulf is eager for the
fray.

The atheling of
Geatmen uttered these words
and

20

Heroic did hasten, not any
rejoinder

Was willing to wait for; the wave-
current swallowed

The doughty-in-
battle. Then a
day's-length
elapsed ere

He is a whole day
reaching the bottom of
the sea.

He was able to see the sea at its
bottom.

Early she found then who fifty of
winters

25

The course of the currents kept in
her fury,

Grisly and greedy, that the grim
one's dominion

Some one of men
from above was

Grendel's mother knows
that some one has
reached her domains.

exploring.

Forth did she grab them,
grappled the warrior

With horrible clutches; yet no
sooner she injured

30

His body unscathed: the burnie
out-guarded,

That she proved but powerless to
pierce through the armor,

The limb-mail locked, with loath-
grabbing fingers.

The sea-wolf bare then, when
bottomward came
she,

She grabs him, and bears
him to her den.

The ring-prince
homeward, that he after was
powerless

(He had daring to do it) to deal
with his weapons,

But many a mere-beast
tormented him
swimming,

Sea-monsters bite and
strike him.

Flood-beasts no
few with fierce-biting tusks did

Break through his burnie, the
brave one pursued they.

The earl then discovered he was
down in some cavern

Where no water whatever
anywise harmed him,

And the clutch of the current
could come not anear him,

Since the roofed-hall prevented;
brightness a-gleaming

Fire-light he saw, flashing
resplendent.

The good one saw then the sea-
bottom's monster,

45

Beowulf attacks the
mother of Grendel.

The mighty mere-
woman; he made a great onset

With weapon-of-battle, his hand
not desisted

From striking, that war-blade
struck on her head then

A battle-song greedy. The
stranger perceived
then

The sword will not bite.

The sword would not bite, her life
would not injure,

But the falchion failed the folk-
prince when straitened:

Erst had it often onsets
encountered,

Oft cloven the helmet, the fated
one's armor:

'Twas the first time that ever the
excellent jewel

Had failed of its fame. Firm-
mooded after,

Not heedless of valor, but
mindful of glory,

Was Higelac's kinsman; the hero-
chief angry

Cast then his carved-sword
covered with jewels

That it lay on the earth, hard and
steel-pointed;

He hoped in his strength, his hand-
grapple sturdy. The hero throws down all
weapons, and again
trusts to his hand-grip.

60

So any must act whenever he
thinketh

To gain him in battle glory
unending,

And is reckless of living. The lord
of the War-Geats

(He shrank not from battle)
seized by the shoulder²

The mother of Grendel; then
mighty in struggle

65

Swung he his enemy, since his
anger was kindled,

That she fell to the floor. With
furious grapple

She gave him Beowulf falls.
requit³al early thereafter,

And stretched out to grab him;
the strongest of warriors

Faint-mooded stumbled, till he
fell in his traces,

70 The monster sits on him
with drawn sword.

Foot-going
champion. Then she sat on the
hall-guest

And wielded her war-knife wide-
bladed, flashing,

For her son would take
vengeance, her one only bairn.

His breast-armor His armor saves his life.
woven bode on his shoulder;

It guarded his life, the entrance
defended

75

'Gainst sword-point and edges.
Ecgtheow's son there

Had fatally journeyed, champion
of Geatmen,

In the arms of the ocean, had the
armor not given,

Close-woven corslet, comfort and
succor,

And had God most God arranged for his
escape.
holy not awarded
the victory,

80

All-knowing Lord; easily did
heaven's

Ruler most righteous arrange it
with justice;⁴

Uprose he erect ready for battle.

[1] Kl. emends 'wæl-sweord.' The half-line would then read, 'the battle-sword splendid.'—For 'heard-ecg' in next half-verse, see note to [20.39](#) above.

[2] Sw., R., and t.B. suggest 'feaxe' for 'eaxe' (1538) and render: *Seized by the hair*.

[3] If 'hand-léan' be accepted (as the MS. has it), the line will read: *She hand-reward gave him early thereafter*.

[4] Sw. and S. change H.-So.'s semicolon (v. 1557) to a comma, and translate: *The Ruler of Heaven arranged it in justice easily, after he arose again*.

XXIV.

BEOWULF IS DOUBLE- CONQUEROR.

Then he saw mid Beowulf grasps a giant-
sword,
the war-gems a
weapon of victory,

An ancient giant-sword, of edges
a-doughty,

Glory of warriors: of weapons
'twas choicest,

Only 'twas larger than any man
else was

5

Able to bear to the battle-
encounter,

The good and splendid work of
the giants.

He grasped then the sword-hilt,
knight of the Scyldings,

Bold and battle-grim, brandished
his ring-sword,

Hopeless of living, hotly he smote
her,

10

That the fiend-woman's neck
firmly it grappled,

Broke through her and fells the female
monster.
bone-joints, the
bill fully pierced her

Fate-cursèd body, she fell to the
ground then:

The hand-sword was bloody, the
hero exulted.

The brand was brilliant, brightly
it glimmered,

Just as from heaven gemlike
shineth

The torch of the firmament. He
glanced 'long the building,

And turned by the wall then,
Higelac's vassal

Raging and wrathful raised his
battle-sword

Strong by the handle. The edge
was not useless

To the hero-in-battle, but he
speedily wished to

Give Grendel requital for the
many assaults he

Had worked on the West-Danes
not once, but often,

When he slew in slumber the
subjects of Hrothgar,

Swallowed down fifteen sleeping
retainers

25

Of the folk of the Danemen, and
fully as many

Carried away, a horrible prey.

He gave him requital, grim-
raging champion,

When he saw on
his rest-place
weary of conflict

Beowulf sees the body of
Grendel, and cuts off his
head.

Grendel lying, of life-joys
bereavèd,

30

As the battle at Heorot erstwhile
had scathed him;

His body far bounded, a blow
when he suffered,

Death having seized him, sword-
smiting heavy,

And he cut off his head then.

Early this noticed

The clever carles who as
comrades of
Hrothgar

The waters are gory.

35

Gazed on the sea-deeps, that the
surging wave-currents

Were mightily mingled, the
mere-flood was gory:

Of the good one the gray-haired
together held
converse,

Beowulf is given up for
dead.

The hoary of head,

that they hoped not to see again

The atheling ever, that exulting
in victory

40

He'd return there to visit the
distinguished folk-ruler:

Then many concluded the mere-
wolf had killed him.¹

The ninth hour came then. From
the ness-edge departed

The bold-mooded Scyldings; the
gold-friend of heroes

Homeward betook him. The
strangers sat down then

45

Soul-sick, sorrowful, the sea-
waves regarding:

They wished and yet weened not
their well-loved
friend-lord

The giant-sword melts.

To see any more. The sword-
blade began then,

The blood having touched it,
contracting and shriveling

With battle-icicles; 'twas a
wonderful marvel

50

That it melted entirely, likest to
ice when

The Father unbindeth the bond
of the frost and

Unwindeth the wave-bands, He
who wieldeth dominion

Of times and of tides: a truth-
firm Creator.

Nor took he of jewels more in the dwelling,

55

Lord of the Weders, though they lay all around him,

Than the head and the handle handsome with jewels;

The brand early melted, burnt was the weapon:²

So hot was the blood, the strange-spirit poisonous

The hero swims back to the realms of day.

That in it did perish. He early swam off then

60

Who had bided in combat the carnage of haters,

Went up through the ocean; the
eddies were cleansèd,

The spacious expanses, when the
spirit from farland

His life put aside and this short-
lived existence.

The seamen's defender came
swimming to land then

65

Doughty of spirit, rejoiced in his
sea-gift,

The bulky burden which he bore
in his keeping.

The excellent vassals advanced
then to meet him,

To God they were grateful, were
glad in their chieftain,

That to see him safe and sound
was granted them.

70

From the high-minded hero,
then, helmet and burnie

Were speedily loosened: the
ocean was putrid,

The water 'neath welkin weltered
with gore.

Forth did they fare, then, their
footsteps retracing,

Merry and mirthful, measured
the earth-way,

75

The highway familiar: men very
daring³

Bare then the head from the sea-
cliff, burdening

Each of the earlmen, excellent-
valiant.

Four of them had It takes four men to carry
Grendel's head on a
to carry with labor spear.

The head of Grendel to the high
towering gold-hall

80

Upstuck on the spear, till
fourteen most-valiant

And battle-brave Geatmen came
there going

Straight to the palace: the prince
of the people

Measured the mead-ways, their
mood-brave companion.

The atheling of earlmen entered
the building,

85

Deed-valiant man, adorned with
distinction,

Doughty shield-warrior, to
address King Hrothgar:

Then hung by the hair, the head
of Grendel

Was borne to the building, where
beer-thanes were drinking,

Loth before earlmen and eke
'fore the lady:

90

The warriors beheld then a
wonderful sight.

[1] 'Þæs monige gewearð' (1599) and 'hafað þæs geworden' (2027).—In a paper published some years ago in one of the Johns Hopkins University circulars, I tried to throw upon these two long-doubtful passages some light derived from a study of like passages in Alfred's prose.—The impersonal verb 'geweorðan,' with an accus. of the person, and a þæt-clause is used several times with the meaning 'agree.' See Orosius (Sweet's ed.) 178₇; 204₃₄; 208₂₈; 210₁₅; 280₂₀. In

the two Beowulf passages, the þæt-clause is anticipated by ‘þæs,’ which is clearly a gen. of the thing agreed on.

The first passage (v. 1599 (b)-1600) I translate literally: *Then many agreed upon this (namely), that the sea-wolf had killed him.*

The second passage (v. 2025 (b)-2027): *She is promised ...; to this the friend of the Scyldings has agreed, etc.* By emending ‘is’ instead of ‘wæs’ (2025), the tenses will be brought into perfect harmony.

In v. 1997 ff. this same idiom occurs, and was noticed in B.’s great article on Beowulf, which appeared about the time I published my reading of 1599 and 2027. Translate 1997 then: *Wouldst let the South-Danes themselves decide about their struggle with Grendel.* Here ‘Súð-Dene’ is accus. of person, and ‘gúðe’ is gen. of thing agreed on.

With such collateral support as that afforded by B. (P. and B. XII. 97), I have no hesitation in departing from H.-So., my usual guide.

The idiom above treated runs through A.-S., Old Saxon, and other Teutonic languages, and should be noticed in the lexicons.

[2] ‘Bróden-mæl’ is regarded by most scholars as meaning a damaskeened sword. Translate: *The damaskeened sword burned up.* Cf. [25 16](#) and note.

[3] ‘Cyning-balde’ (1635) is the much-disputed reading of K. and Th. To render this, “*nobly bold*,” “*excellently bold*,” have been suggested. B. would read ‘cyning-holde’ (cf. 290), and render: *Men well-disposed towards the king carried the head, etc.* ‘Cynebealde,’ says t.B., endorsing Gr.

XXV.

BEOWULF BRINGS HIS TROPHIES.—HROTHGAR'S GRATITUDE.

Beowulf spake,
offspring of
Ecgtheow:

Beowulf relates his last
exploit.

“Lo! we blithely have brought
thee, bairn of Healfdene,

Prince of the Scyldings, these
presents from ocean

Which thine eye looketh on, for
an emblem of glory.

5

I came off alive from this,
narrowly 'scaping:

In war 'neath the water the work
with great pains I

Performed, and the fight had
been finished quite nearly,

Had God not defended me. I
failed in the battle

Aught to accomplish, aided by
Hrunting,

10

Though that weapon was worthy,
but the Wielder of
earth-folk

God was fighting with
me.

Gave me willingly
to see on the wall a

Heavy old hand-sword hanging
in splendor

(He guided most often the lorn
and the friendless),

That I swung as a weapon. The
wards of the house then

I killed in the conflict (when
occasion was given me).

Then the battle-sword burned,
the brand that was lifted,¹

As the blood-current sprang,
hottest of war-sweats;

Seizing the hilt, from my foes I
offbore it;

I avenged as I ought to their acts
of malignity,

The murder of Danemen. I then
make thee this
promise,

Heorot is freed from
monsters.

Thou'lt be able in
Heorot careless to slumber

With thy throng of heroes and
the thanes of thy people

Every and each, of greater and
lesser,

And thou needest not fear for
them from the selfsame direction

25

As thou formerly fearedst, oh,
folk-lord of Scyldings,

End-day for earlmen.” To the
age-hoary man
then,

The famous sword is
presented to Hrothgar.

The gray-haired
chieftain, the gold-fashioned
sword-hilt,

Old-work of giants, was
thereupon given;

Since the fall of the fiends, it fell
to the keeping

30

Of the wielder of Danemen, the
wonder-smith's labor,

And the bad-mooded being
abandoned this world then,

Opponent of God, victim of
murder,

And also his mother; it went to
the keeping

Of the best of the world-kings,
where waters encircle,

35

Who the scot divided in Scylding
dominion.

Hrothgar
discoursed, the

Hrothgar looks closely at
the old sword.

hilt he regarded,

The ancient heirloom where an
old-time contention's

Beginning was graven: the
gurgling currents,

The flood slew thereafter the race
of the giants,

40

They had proved themselves
daring: that people
was loth to

It had belonged to a race
hateful to God.

The Lord
everlasting, through lash of the
billows

The Father gave them final
requital.

So in letters of rune on the clasp
of the handle

Gleaming and golden, 'twas
graven exactly,

45

Set forth and said, whom that
sword had been made for,

Finest of irons, who first it was
wrought for,

Wreathed at its handle and
gleaming with serpents.

The wise one then said (silent
they all were)

Son of old
Healfdene: "He
may say unrefuted

Hrothgar praises
Beowulf.

50

Who performs 'mid the folk-men
fairness and truth

(The hoary old ruler remembers
the past),

That better by birth is this bairn
of the nobles!

Thy fame is extended through
far-away countries,

Good friend Beowulf, o'er all of
the races,

55

Thou holdest all firmly, hero-like
strength with

Prudence of spirit. I'll prove
myself grateful

As before we agreed on; thou
granted for long shalt

Become a great comfort to
kinsmen and comrades,

A help unto
heroes. Heremod
became not

Heremod's career is again
contrasted with
Beowulf's.

60

Such to the Scyldings, successors
of Ecgwela;

He grew not to please them, but
grievous destruction,

And diresome death-woes to
Danemen attracted;

He slew in anger his table-
companions,

Trustworthy counsellors, till he
turned off lonely

65

From world-joys away, wide-
famous ruler:

Though high-ruling heaven in
hero-strength raised him,
In might exalted him, o'er men of
all nations
Made him supreme, yet a
murderous spirit
Grew in his bosom: he gave then
no ring-gems

70

A wretched failure of a
king, to give no jewels to
his retainers.

To the Danes after
custom; endured
he unjoyful

Standing the straits from strife
that was raging,

Longsome folk-sorrow. Learn
then from this,

Lay hold of virtue! Though laden
with winters,

I have sung thee these measures.
'Tis a marvel to tell
it,

Hrothgar moralizes.

75

How all-ruling God from
greatness of spirit

Giveth wisdom to children of
men,

Manor and earlship: all things He
ruleth.

He often permitteth the mood-
thought of man of

The illustrious lineage to lean to
possessions,

80

Allows him earthly delights at his
manor,

A high-burg of heroes to hold in
his keeping,

Maketh portions of earth-folk
hear him,

And a wide-reaching kingdom so
that, wisdom failing him,

He himself is unable to reckon its
boundaries;

85

He liveth in luxury, little debars
him,

Nor sickness nor age, no
treachery-sorrow

Becloudeth his spirit, conflict
nowhere,

No sword-hate, appeareth, but all
of the world doth

Wend as he wisheth; the worse
he knoweth not,

90

Till arrant arrogance inward
pervading,

Waxeth and springeth, when the
warder is sleeping,

The guard of the soul: with
sorrows encompassed,

Too sound is his slumber, the
slayer is near him,

Who with bow and arrow aimeth
in malice.

[1] Or rather, perhaps, '*the inlaid, or damaskeened
weapon.*' Cf. [24.57](#) and note.

XXVI.

HROTHGAR MORALIZES.—REST AFTER LABOR.

“Then bruised in A wounded spirit.
his bosom he with bitter-toothed
missile

Is hurt 'neath his helmet: from
harmful pollution

He is powerless to shield him by
the wonderful mandates

Of the loath-cursèd spirit; what
too long he hath holden

5

Him seemeth too small, savage
he hoardeth,

Nor boastfully giveth gold-plated
rings,¹

The fate of the future flouts and
forgetteth

Since God had erst given him
greatness no little,

Wielder of Glory. His end-day
anear,

10

It afterward happens that the
bodily-dwelling

Fleetingly fadeth, falls into ruins;

Another lays hold who doleth the
ornaments,

The nobleman's jewels, nothing
lamenting,

Heedeth no terror. Oh, Beowulf
dear,

15

Best of the heroes, from bale-
strife defend thee,

And choose thee the better,
counsels eternal;

Beware of
arrogance, world-
famous champion!

Be not over proud: life is
fleeting, and its strength
soon wasteth away.

But a little-while lasts thy life-
vigor's fulness;

'Twill after hap early, that illness
or sword-edge

20

Shall part thee from strength, or
the grasp of the fire,

Or the wave of the current, or
clutch of the edges,

Or flight of the war-spear, or age
with its horrors,

Or thine eyes' bright flashing
shall fade into darkness:

'Twill happen full early, excellent
hero,

25

Hrothgar gives an
account of his reign.

That death shall
subdue thee. So the Danes a half-
century

I held under heaven, helped them
in struggles

'Gainst many a race in middle-
earth's regions,

With ash-wood and edges, that
enemies none

On earth molested me. Lo!
offsetting change, now,

30

Sorrow after joy.

Came to my manor, grief after
joyance,

When Grendel became my
constant visitor,

Inveterate hater: I from that
malice

Continually travailed with
trouble no little.

Thanks be to God that I gained in
my lifetime,

35

To the Lord everlasting, to look
on the gory

Head with mine eyes, after long-
lasting sorrow!

Go to the bench now, battle-
adornèd

Joy in the feasting: of jewels in
common

We'll meet with many when
morning appeareth.”

40

The Geatman was gladsome,
ganged he immediately

To go to the bench, as the clever
one bade him.

Then again as before were the
famous-for-prowess,

Hall-inhabiters, handsomely
banqueted,

Feasted anew. The night-veil fell
then

45

Dark o'er the warriors. The
courtiers rose then;

The gray-haired was anxious to
go to his slumbers,

The hoary old Scylding.

Hankered the

Geatman,

Beowulf is fagged, and
seeks rest.

The champion

doughty, greatly, to rest him:

An earlman early outward did
lead him,

50

Fagged from his faring, from far-
country springing,

Who for etiquette's sake all of a
liegeman's

Needs regarded, such as seamen
at that time

Were bounden to feel. The big-
hearted rested;

The building uptowered,
spacious and gilded,

55

The guest within slumbered, till
the sable-clad raven

Blithely foreboded the beacon of
heaven.

Then the bright-shining sun o'er
the bottoms came going;²

The warriors hastened, the heads
of the peoples

Were ready to go again to their
peoples,

60

The Geats prepare to
leave Dane-land.

The high-mooded
farer would faraway thenceward

Look for his vessel. The valiant
one bade then,³

Offspring of
Ecglaf, off to bear
Hrunting,

Unferth asks Beowulf to
accept his sword as a gift.
Beowulf thanks him.

To take his weapon, his well-
beloved iron;

He him thanked for the gift,
saying good he accounted

65

The war-friend and mighty, nor
chid he with words then

The blade of the brand: 'twas a
brave-mooded hero.

When the warriors were ready,
arrayed in their trappings,

The atheling dear to the
Danemen advanced then

On to the dais, where the other
was sitting,

70

Grim-mooded hero, greeted King
Hrothgar.

[1] K. says '*proudly giveth.*'—Gr. says, '*And gives no gold-plated rings, in order to incite the recipient to boastfulness.*'—B. suggests 'gyld' for 'gylp,' and renders: *And gives no beaten rings for reward.*

[2] If S.'s emendation be accepted, v. 57 will read: *Then came the light, going bright after darkness: the warriors, etc.*

[3] As the passage stands in H.-So., Unferth presents Beowulf with the sword Hrunting, and B. thanks him for the gift. If, however, the suggestions of Grdvtg. and M. be accepted, the passage will read: *Then the brave one (i.e. Beowulf) commanded that Hrunting be borne to the son of Ecglaf (Unferth), bade him take his sword, his dear weapon; he (B.) thanked him (U.) for the loan, etc.*

XXVII.

SORROW AT PARTING.

Beowulf's farewell.

Beowulf spake, Ecgtheow's
offspring:

“We men of the water wish to
declare now

Fared from far-lands, we're
firmly determined

To seek King Higelac. Here have
we fitly

5
Been welcomed and feasted, as
heart would desire it;

Good was the greeting. If greater
affection

I am anywise able ever on earth
to

Gain at thy hands, ruler of
heroes,

Than yet I have done, I shall
quickly be ready

10

I shall be ever ready to
aid thee.

For combat and
conflict. O'er the course of the
waters

Learn I that neighbors alarm thee
with terror,

As haters did whilom, I hither
will bring thee

For help unto heroes henchmen
by thousands.

My liegelord will
encourage me in aiding
thee.

I know as to Higelac, the lord of
the Geatmen,

15

Though young in years, he yet
will permit me,

By words and by works, ward of
the people,

Fully to furnish thee forces and
bear thee

My lance to relieve thee, if
liegemen shall fail thee,

And help of my hand-strength; if
Hrethric be treating,

20

Bairn of the king, at the court of
the Geatmen,

He thereat may find him friends
in abundance:

Faraway countries he were better
to seek for

Who trusts in himself.” Hrothgar
discoursed then,

Making rejoinder: “These words
thou hast uttered

25

All-knowing God hath given thy
spirit!

Ne’er heard I an O Beowulf, thou art wise
beyond thy years.
earlman thus early
in life

More clever in speaking: thou’rt
cautious of spirit,

Mighty of muscle, in mouth-
answers prudent.

I count on the hope that, happen
it ever

That missile shall rob thee of
Hrethel's descendant,

Edge-horrid battle, and illness or
weapon

Deprive thee of prince, of
people's protector,

And life thou yet
holdest, the Sea-
Geats will never

Should Higelac die, the
Geats could find no better
successor than thou
wouldst make.

Find a more fitting folk-lord to
choose them,

Gem-ward of heroes, than *thou*
mightest prove thee,

If the kingdom of kinsmen thou
carest to govern.

Thy mood-spirit likes me the
longer the better,

Beowulf dear: thou hast brought
it to pass that

To both these peoples peace shall
be common,

40

To Geat-folk and
Danemen, the
strife be suspended,

Thou hast healed the
ancient breach between
our races.

The secret assailings they
suffered in yore-days;

And also that jewels be shared
while I govern

The wide-stretching kingdom,
and that many shall visit

Others o'er the ocean with
excellent gift-gems:

The ring-adorned bark shall
bring o'er the currents

Presents and love-gifts. This
people I know

Tow'rd foeman and friend firmly
established,¹

After ancient etiquette everywise
blameless."

Then the warden of earlmen gave
him still farther,

Kinsman of
Healdfene, a dozen of jewels,

Bade him safely seek with the
presents

His well-beloved people, early
returning.

Then the noble-
born king kissed
the distinguished,

Hrothgar kisses Beowulf,
and weeps.

Dear-lovèd liegeman, the Dane-
prince saluted him,

55

And claspèd his neck; tears from
him fell,

From the gray-headed man: he
two things expected,

Agèd and reverend, but rather
the second,

That bold in council they'd meet
thereafter.

The man was so dear that he
failed to suppress the

60

Emotions that moved him, but in
mood-fetters
fastened

The old king is deeply
grieved to part with his
benefactor.

The long-famous
hero longeth in
secret

Deep in his spirit for the dear-
beloved man

Though not a blood-kinsman.
Beowulf thenceward,

Gold-splendid warrior, walked
o'er the meadows

65

Exulting in treasure: the sea-
going vessel

Riding at anchor awaited its
owner.

As they pressed on their way
then, the present
of Hrothgar

Giving liberally is the true
proof of kingship.

Was frequently
referred to: a folk-king indeed
that

Everyway blameless, till age did
debar him

70

The joys of his might, which hath
many oft injured.

[1] For ‘geworhte,’ the crux of this passage, B. proposes ‘geþóhte,’ rendering: *I know this people with firm thought every way blameless towards foe and friends.*

[2] S. and B. emend so as to negative the verb ‘meet.’ “Why should Hrothgar weep if he expects to meet Beowulf again?” both these scholars ask. But the weeping is mentioned before the ‘expectations’: the tears may have been due to many emotions, especially gratitude, struggling for expression.

XXVIII.

THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY.— THE TWO QUEENS.

Then the band of very valiant
retainers

Came to the current; they were
clad all in armor,

In link-woven The coast-guard again.

burnies. The land-warder noticed

The return of the earlmen, as he
erstwhile had seen them;

5

Nowise with insult he greeted the
strangers

From the naze of the cliff, but
rode on to meet them;

Said the bright-armored visitors¹
vesselward traveled

Welcome to Weders. The wide-
bosomed craft then

Lay on the sand, laden with
armor,

10

With horses and jewels, the ring-
stemmed sailer:

The mast uptowered o'er the
treasure of
Hrothgar.

Beowulf gives the guard a
handsome sword.

To the boat-ward a
gold-bound brand he presented,

That he was afterwards honored
on the ale-bench more highly

As the heirloom's owner. ²Set he
out on his vessel,

15

To drive on the deep, Dane-
country left he.

Along by the mast then a sea-
garment fluttered,

A rope-fastened sail. The sea-
boat resounded,

The wind o'er the waters the
wave-floater nowise

Kept from its journey; the sea-
goer traveled,

20

The foamy-necked floated forth
o'er the currents,

The well-fashioned vessel o'er the
ways of the ocean,

Till they came
within sight of the
cliffs of the Geatmen,

The Geats see their own
land again.

The well-known headlands. The
wave-goer hastened

Driven by breezes, stood on the
shore.

25

Prompt at the
ocean, the port-
ward was ready,

The port-warden is
anxiously looking for
them.

Who long in the past outlooked
in the distance,³

At water's-edge waiting well-
lovèd heroes;

He bound to the bank then the
broad-bosomed vessel

Fast in its fetters, lest the force of
the waters

30

Should be able to injure the
ocean-wood winsome.

Bade he up then take the treasure
of princes,

Plate-gold and fretwork; not far
was it thence

To go off in search of the giver of
jewels:

Hrethel's son Higelac at home
there remaineth,⁴

35

Himself with his comrades close
to the sea-coast.

The building was splendid, the
king heroic,

Great in his hall, Hygd very
young was,

Fine-mooded,
clever, though few
were the winters

Hygd, the noble queen of
Higelac, lavish of gifts.

That the daughter of Hæreth had
dwelt in the borough;

40

But she nowise was cringing nor
niggard of presents,

Of ornaments rare, to the race of
the Geatmen.

Thrytho nursed
anger, excellent⁵
folk-queen,

Offa's consort, Thrytho, is
contrasted with Hygd.

Hot-burning hatred: no hero
whatever

'Mong household companions,
her husband
excepted

She is a terror to all save
her husband.

45

Dared to adventure to look at the
woman

With eyes in the daytime;⁶ but he
knew that death-chains

Hand-wreathed were wrought
him: early thereafter,

When the hand-strife was over,
edges were ready,

That fierce-raging sword-point
had to force a decision,

50

Murder-bale show. Such no
womanly custom

For a lady to practise, though
lovely her person,

That a weaver-of-peace, on
pretence of anger

A belovèd liegeman of life should
deprive.

Soothly this hindered Heming's
kinsman;

55

Other ale-drinking earlmen
asserted

That fearful folk-sorrows fewer
she wrought them,

Treacherous doings, since first
she was given

Adorned with gold to the war-
hero youthful,

For her origin honored, when
Offa's great palace

60

O'er the fallow flood by her
father's instructions

She sought on her journey, where
she afterwards fully,

Famed for her virtue, her fate on
the king's-seat

Enjoyed in her lifetime, love did
she hold with

The ruler of heroes, the best, it is
told me,

65

Of all of the earthmen that
oceans encompass,

Of earl-kindreds endless; hence
Offa was famous

Far and widely, by gifts and by
battles,

Spear-valiant hero; the home of
his fathers

He governed with wisdom,
whence Eomær did issue

70

For help unto heroes, Heming's
kinsman,

Grandson of Garmund, great in
encounters.

[1] For 'scawan' (1896), 'scaðan' has been proposed. Accepting this, we may render: *He said the bright-armored warriors were going to their vessel, welcome, etc.* (Cf. 1804.)

[2] R. suggests, ‘Gewát him on naca,’ and renders: *The vessel set out, to drive on the sea, the Dane-country left.* ‘On’ bears the alliteration; cf. ‘on hafu’ (2524). This has some advantages over the H.-So. reading; viz. (1) It adds nothing to the text; (2) it makes ‘naca’ the subject, and thus brings the passage into keeping with the context, where the poet has exhausted his vocabulary in detailing the actions of the vessel.—B.’s emendation (cf. P. and B. XII. 97) is violent.

[3] B. translates: *Who for a long time, ready at the coast, had looked out into the distance eagerly for the dear men.* This changes the syntax of ‘léofra manna.’

[4] For ‘wunað’ (v. 1924) several eminent critics suggest ‘wunade’ (=remained). This makes the passage much clearer.

[5] Why should such a woman be described as an ‘excellent’ queen? C. suggests ‘frécnu’ = dangerous, bold.

[6] For ‘an dæges’ various readings have been offered. If ‘and-éges’ be accepted, the sentence will read: *No hero ... dared look upon her, eye to eye.* If ‘án-dæges’ be adopted, translate: *Dared look upon her the whole day.*

XXIX.

BEOWULF AND HIGELAC.

Then the brave one departed, his
band along with
him,

Beowulf and his party
seek Higelac.

Seeking the sea-
shore, the sea-marches treading,

The wide-stretching shores. The
world-candle glimmered,

The sun from the southward;
they proceeded then onward,

5

Early arriving where they heard
that the troop-lord,

Ongentheow's slayer, excellent,
youthful

Folk-prince and warrior was
distributing jewels,

Close in his castle. The coming of
Beowulf

Was announced in a message
quickly to Higelac,

10

That the folk-troop's defender
forth to the palace

The linden-companion alive was
advancing,

Secure from the combat
courtward a-going.

The building was early inward
made ready

For the foot-going guests as the
good one had ordered.

He sat by the man
then who had lived through the
struggle,

Kinsman by kinsman, when the
king of the people

Had in lordly language saluted
the dear one,

In words that were Queen Hygd receives the
heroes.
formal. The
daughter of Hæreth

Coursed through the building,
carrying mead-cups:¹

She loved the retainers, tendered
the beakers

To the high-minded Geatmen.
Higelac 'gan then

Pleasantly plying
his companion
with questions

Higelac is greatly
interested in Beowulf's
adventures.

In the high-towering palace. A
curious interest

Tormented his spirit, what
meaning to see in

25

The Sea-Geats' adventures:
"Beowulf worthy,

How throve your
journeying, when
thou thoughtest
suddenly

Give an account of thy
adventures, Beowulf
dear.

Far o'er the salt-streams to seek
an encounter,

A battle at Heorot? Hast bettered
for Hrothgar,

The famous folk-leader, his far-
published sorrows

30

Any at all? In
agony-billows

My suspense has been
great.

I mused upon
torture, distrusted the journey

Of the beloved liegeman; I long
time did pray thee

By no means to seek out the
murderous spirit,

To suffer the South-Danes
themselves to decide on²

35

Grappling with Grendel. To God I
am thankful

To be suffered to see thee safe
from thy journey.”

Beowulf answered, Beowulf narrates his adventures.
bairn of old

Ecgtheow:

“’Tis hidden by no means,
Higelac chieftain,

From many of men, the meeting
so famous,

40

What mournful moments of me
and of Grendel

Were passed in the place where
he pressing affliction

On the Victory-Scyldings
scathefully brought,

Anguish forever; that all I
avengèd,

So that any under heaven of the
kinsmen of Grendel

Needeth not boast
of that cry-in-the-morning,

Who longest liveth of the loth-
going kindred,³

Encompassed by moorland. I
came in my journey

To the royal ring-hall, Hrothgar
to greet there:

Soon did the
famous scion of
Healfdene,

When he understood fully the
spirit that led me,

Assign me a seat with the son of
his bosom.

The troop was in joyance; mead-
glee greater

'Neath arch of the ether not ever
beheld I

'Mid hall-building The queen also showed
up no little honor.
holders. The
highly-famed queen,

55

Peace-tie of peoples, oft passed
through the building,

Cheered the young troopers; she
oft tendered a hero

A beautiful ring-band, ere she
went to her sitting.

Oft the daughter of Hrothgar's lovely
daughter.
Hrothgar in view
of the courtiers

To the earls at the end the ale-
vessel carried,

60

Whom Freaware I heard then
hall-sitters title,

When nail-adorned jewels she
gave to the heroes:

Gold-bedecked,
youthful, to the
glad son of Froda

She is betrothed to
Ingeld, in order to unite
the Danes and
Heathobards.

Her faith has been plighted; the
friend of the Scyldings,

The guard of the kingdom, hath
given his sanction,⁴

65

And counts it a vantage, for a
part of the quarrels,

A portion of hatred, to pay with
the woman.

5Somewhere not rarely, when the
ruler has fallen,

The life-taking lance relaxeth its
fury

For a brief breathing-spell,
though the bride be charming!

[1] ‘Meodu-scencum’ (1981) some would render ‘*with mead-pourers.*’ Translate then: *The daughter of Hæreth went through the building accompanied by mead-pourers.*

[2] See my note to [1599](#), supra, and B. in P. and B. XII. 97.

[3] For ‘fenne,’ supplied by Grdtvg., B. suggests ‘fácne’ (cf. Jul. 350). Accepting this, translate: *Who longest lives of the hated race, steeped in treachery.*

[4] See note to [v. 1599](#) above.

[5] This is perhaps the least understood sentence in the poem, almost every word being open to dispute. (1) The ‘nó’ of our text is an emendation, and is rejected by many scholars. (2) ‘Seldan’ is by some taken as an adv. (= *seldom*), and by others as a noun (= *page, companion*). (3) ‘Léod-hryre,’ some render ‘*fall of the people*’; others, ‘*fall of the prince.*’ (4) ‘Búgeð,’ most scholars regard as the intrans. verb meaning ‘*bend,*’ ‘*rest*’; but one great scholar has translated it ‘*shall kill.*’ (5) ‘Hwær,’ Very recently, has been attacked, ‘wære’ being suggested. (6) As a corollary to the

above, the same critic proposes to drop 'oft' out of the text.—t.B. suggests: Oft seldan wære after léodhryre: lýtle hwíle bongár búgeð, þeah séo brýd duge = *often has a treaty been (thus) struck, after a prince had fallen: (but only) a short time is the spear (then) wont to rest, however excellent the bride may be.*

XXX.

BEOWULF NARRATES HIS ADVENTURES TO HIGELAC.

“It well may discomfit the prince
of the Heathobards

And each of the thanemen of
earls that attend him,

When he goes to the building
escorting the woman,

That a noble-born Daneman the
knights should be feasting:

5
There gleam on his person the
leavings of elders

Hard and ring-bright,
Heathobards' treasure,

While they wielded their arms,
till they misled to the battle

Their own dear lives and beloved
companions.

He saith at the banquet who the
collar beholdeth,

10

An ancient ash-warrior who
earlmen's destruction

Clearly recalleth (cruel his spirit),

Sadly beginneth sounding the
youthful

Thane-champion's spirit through
the thoughts of his bosom,

War-grief to waken, and this
word-answer
speaketh:

Ingeld is stirred up to
break the truce.

‘Art thou able, my friend, to
know when thou seest it

The brand which thy father bare
to the conflict

In his latest adventure, ’neath
visor of helmet,

The dearly-loved iron, where
Danemen did slay him,

And brave-mooded Scyldings, on
the fall of the heroes,

(When vengeance was sleeping)
the slaughter-place wielded?

E’en now some man of the
murderer’s progeny

Exulting in ornaments enters the
building,

Boasts of his blood-shedding,
offbeareth the jewel

Which thou shouldst wholly hold
in possession!’

25

So he urgeth and mindeth on
every occasion

With woe-bringing words, till
waxeth the season

When the woman’s thane for the
works of his father,

The bill having bitten, blood-gory
sleepeth,

Fated to perish; the other one
thenceward

30

’Scapeth alive, the land knoweth
thoroughly.¹

Then the oaths of the earlmen on
each side are broken,

When rancors unresting are
raging in Ingeld

And his wife-love waxeth less
warm after sorrow.

So the Heathobards' favor not
faithful I reckon,

35

Their part in the treaty not true
to the Danemen,

Their friendship not fast. I
further shall tell thee

More about
Grendel, that thou
fully mayst hear,

Having made these
preliminary statements, I
will now tell thee of
Grendel, the monster.

Ornament-giver, what afterward
came from

The hand-rush of heroes. When
heaven's bright jewel

40

O'er earthfields had glided, the
stranger came raging,

The horrible night-fiend, us for to
visit,

Where wholly unharmed the hall
we were guarding.

To Hondscio

Hondscio fell first

happened a hopeless contention,

Death to the doomed one, dead
he fell foremost,

45

Girded war-champion; to him
Grendel became then,

To the vassal distinguished, a
tooth-weaponed murderer,

The well-beloved henchman's
body all swallowed.

Not the earlier off empty of hand
did

The bloody-toothed murderer,
mindful of evils,

50

Wish to escape from the gold-
giver's palace,

But sturdy of strength he strove
to outdo me,

Hand-ready grappled. A glove
was suspended

Spacious and wondrous, in art-
feters fastened,

Which was fashioned entirely by
touch of the craftman

55

From the dragon's skin by the
devil's devices:

He down in its depths would do
me unsadly

One among many, deed-doer
raging,

Though sinless he saw me; not so
could it happen

When I in my anger upright did
stand.

60

'Tis too long to recount how
requital I furnished

For every evil to the earlmen's
destroyer;

'Twas there, my
prince, that I
proudly distinguished

I reflected honor upon
my people.

Thy land with my labors. He left
and retreated,

He lived his life a little while
longer:

65

Yet his right-hand guarded his
footstep in Heorot,

And sad-mooded thence to the
sea-bottom fell he,

Mournful in mind. For the
might-rush of
battle

King Hrothgar lavished
gifts upon me.

The friend of the
Scyldings, with gold that was
plated,

With ornaments many, much
requited me,

70

When daylight had dawned, and
down to the banquet

We had sat us together. There
was chanting and joyance:

The age-stricken Scylding asked
many questions

And of old-times related; oft
light-ringing harp-strings,

Joy-telling wood, were touched
by the brave one;

75

Now he uttered measures,
mourning and truthful,

Then the large-hearted land-king
a legend of wonder

Truthfully told us. Now troubled
with years

The age-hoary warrior afterward
began to

The old king is sad over
the loss of his youthful
vigor.

Mourn for the might that marked
him in youth-days;

80

His breast within boiled, when
burdened with winters

Much he remembered. From
morning till night then

We joyed us therein as etiquette
suffered,

Till the second night season came
unto earth-folk.

Then early thereafter, the mother
of Grendel

85

Grendel's mother.

Was ready for
vengeance, wretched she
journeyed;

Her son had death ravished, the
wrath of the Geatmen.

The horrible woman avengèd her
offspring,

And with mighty mainstrength
murdered a hero.

There the spirit of Æschere falls a prey to
her vengeance.
Æschere, agèd
adviser,

90

Was ready to vanish; nor when
morn had lightened

Were they anywise suffered to
consume him with fire,

Folk of the Danemen, the death-
weakened hero,

Nor the belovèd liegeman to lay
on the pyre;

She the corpse had She suffered not his body
to be burned, but ate it.
offcarried in the
clutch of the foeman²

95

'Neath mountain-brook's flood.
To Hrothgar 'twas saddest

Of pains that ever had preyed on
the chieftain;

By the life of thee the land-prince
then me³

Besought very sadly, in sea-
currents' eddies

To display my prowess, to peril
my safety,

100

Might-deeds accomplish; much
did he promise.

I found then the
famous flood-
current's cruel,

I sought the creature in
her den,

Horrible depth-warder. A while
unto us two

Hand was in common; the
currents were seething

With gore that was clotted, and
Grendel's fierce
mother's

and hewed her head off.

105

Head I offhacked in the hall at
the bottom

With huge-reaching sword-edge,
hardly I wrested

My life from her clutches; not
doomed was I
then,

Jewels were freely
bestowed upon me.

But the warden of
earlmen afterward gave me

Jewels in quantity, kinsman of
Healfdene.

[1] For 'lifigende' (2063), a mere conjecture, 'wígende' has been suggested. The line would then read: *Escapeth by fighting, knows the land thoroughly.*

[2] For 'fæðmum,' Gr.'s conjecture, B. proposes 'færunga.' These three half-verses would then read: *She bore off the corpse of her foe suddenly under the mountain-torrent.*

[3] The phrase 'þíne lýfe' (2132) was long rendered 'with thy (presupposed) permission.' The verse would read: *The land-prince then sadly besought me, with thy (presupposed) permission, etc.*

XXXI.

GIFT-GIVING IS MUTUAL.

“So the belovèd land-prince lived
in decorum;

I had missed no rewards, no
meeds of my prowess,

But he gave me jewels, regarding
my wishes,

Healdfene his bairn; I’ll bring
them to thee, then,

5 Atheling of All my gifts I lay at thy
feet.
earlmen, offer them gladly.

And still unto thee is all my
affection:¹

But few of my folk-kin find I
surviving

But thee, dear Higelac!” Bade he
in then to carry²

The boar-image, banner, battle-
high helmet,

10

Iron-gray armor, the excellent
weapon,

In song-measures This armor I have
said: “This suit- belonged of yore to
for-the-battle Heregar.

Hrothgar presented me, bade me
expressly,

Wise-mooded atheling,
thereafter to tell thee³

The whole of its history, said
King Heregar owned it,

15

Dane-prince for long: yet he
wished not to give then

The mail to his son, though
dearly he loved him,

Hereward the hardy. Hold all in
joyance!”

I heard that there followed hard
on the jewels

Two braces of stallions of striking
resemblance,

20

Dappled and yellow; he granted
him usance

Of horses and treasures. So a
kinsman should bear him,

No web of treachery weave for
another,

Nor by cunning craftiness cause
the destruction

Of trusty
companion. Most
precious to Higelac,

Higelac loves his nephew
Beowulf.

25

The bold one in battle, was the
bairn of his sister,

And each unto other mindful of
favors.

I am told that to
Hygd he proffered
the necklace,

Beowulf gives Hygd the
necklace that
Wealththeow had given
him.

Wonder-gem rare that
Wealththeow gave him,

The troop-leader's daughter, a
trio of horses

30

Slender and saddle-bright; soon
did the jewel

Embellish her bosom, when the
beer-feast was over.

So Ecgtheow's bairn brave did
prove him,

War-famous man, Beowulf is famous.
by deeds that were valiant,

He lived in honor, beloved
companions

35

Slew not carousing; his mood
was not cruel,

But by hand-strength hugest of
heroes then living

The brave one retained the
bountiful gift that

The Lord had allowed him. Long
was he wretched,

So that sons of the Geatmen
accounted him worthless,

40

And the lord of the liegemen loth
was to do him

Mickle of honor, when mead-
cups were passing;

They fully believed him idle and
sluggish,

An indolent
atheling: to the
honor-blest man
there

He is requited for the
slights suffered in earlier
days.

Came requital for the cuts he had
suffered.

45

The folk-troop's defender bade
fetch to the building

The heirloom of Hrethel,
embellished with
gold,

Higelac overwhelms the
conqueror with gifts.

So the brave one
enjoined it; there was jewel no
richer

In the form of a weapon 'mong
Geats of that era;

In Beowulf's keeping he placed it
and gave him

50

Seven of thousands, manor and
lordship.

Common to both was land 'mong
the people,

Estate and inherited rights and
possessions,

To the second one specially
spacious dominions,

To the one who was better. It
afterward happened

55

In days that followed, befell the
battle-thanes,

After Higelac's
death, and when

*After Heardred's death,
Beowulf becomes king.*

Heardred was murdered

With weapons of warfare 'neath
well-covered targets,

When valiant battlemen in
victor-band sought him,

War-Scylfing heroes harassed the
nephew

Of Hereric in battle. To Beowulf's
keeping

Turned there in time extensive
dominions:

He fittingly ruled He rules the Geats fifty
years.
them a fifty of
winters

(He a man-ruler wise was,
manor-ward old) till

A certain one 'gan, on gloom-
darkening nights,

a The fire-drake.

Dragon, to govern, who guarded
a treasure,

A high-rising stone-cliff, on heath
that was grayish:

A path 'neath it lay, unknown
unto mortals.

Some one of earthmen entered
the mountain,

The heathenish hoard laid hold
of with ardor;

70

* * * * *

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[1] This verse B. renders, ‘*Now serve I again thee alone as my gracious king.*’

[2] For ‘*eafor*’ (2153), Kl. suggests ‘*ealdor.*’ Translate then: *Bade the prince then to bear in the banner, battle-high helmet, etc.* On the other hand, W. takes ‘*eaforhéafodsegn*’ as a compound, meaning ‘helmet’: *He bade them bear in the helmet, battle-high helm, gray armor, etc.*

[3] The H.-So. rendering (*ærest* = *history, origin*; ‘*eft*’ for ‘*est*’), though liable to objection, is perhaps the best offered. ‘That I should very early tell thee of his favor, kindness’ sounds well; but ‘his’ is badly placed to limit ‘*ést.*’—Perhaps, ‘*eft*’ with verbs of saying may have the force of Lat. prefix ‘*re,*’ and the H.-So. reading mean, ‘that I should its origin rehearse to thee.’

XXXII.

THE HOARD AND THE DRAGON.

* * * * *
* *

He sought of himself who sorely
did harm him,

But, for need very pressing, the
servant of one of

The sons of the heroes hate-
blows evaded,

5
Seeking for shelter and the sin-
driven warrior

Took refuge within there. He
early looked in it,

* * * * *
* *
* * * * *
* *

* * * * * when the onset
surprised him,

10

The hoard.

He a gem-vessel

saw there: many of suchlike

Ancient ornaments in the earth-
cave were lying,

As in days of yore some one of
men of

Illustrious lineage, as a legacy
monstrous,

There had secreted them, careful
and thoughtful,

Dear-valued jewels. Death had
 offsnatched them,

In the days of the past, and the
 one man moreover

Of the flower of the folk who
 fared there the longest,

Was fain to defer it, friend-
 mourning warder,

A little longer to be left in
 enjoyment

Of long-lasting treasure.¹ A
 barrow all-ready

Stood on the plain the stream-
 currents nigh to,

New by the ness-edge, unnethe of
 approaching:

The keeper of rings carried
within a

²Ponderous deal of the treasure of
nobles,

25

Of gold that was beaten, briefly
he spake then:³

“Hold thou, O
Earth, now heroes
no more may,

The ring-giver bewails
the loss of retainers.

The earnings of earlmen. Lo! erst
in thy bosom

Worthy men won them; war-
death hath ravished,

Perilous life-bale, all my
warriors,

30

Liegemen belovèd, who this life
have forsaken,

Who hall-pleasures saw. No
sword-bearer have I,

And no one to burnish the gold-
plated vessel,

The high-valued beaker: my
heroes are vanished.

The hardy helmet behung with
gilding

35

Shall be reaved of its riches: the
ring-cleansers slumber

Who were charged to have ready
visors-for-battle,

And the burnie that bided in
battle-encounter

O'er breaking of war-shields the
bite of the edges

Moulds with the hero. The ring-
twisted armor,

40

Its lord being lifeless, no longer
may journey

Hanging by heroes; harp-joy is
vanished,

The rapture of glee-wood, no
excellent falcon

Swoops through the building, no
swift-footed charger

Grindeth the gravel. A grievous
destruction

45

No few of the world-folk widely
hath scattered!”

So, woful of spirit one after all
Lamented mournfully, moaning
in sadness

By day and by night, till death
with its billows

Dashed on his The fire-dragon
spirit. Then the ancient dusk-
scather

50

Found the great treasure
standing all open,

He who flaming and fiery flies to
the barrows,

Naked war-dragon, nightly
escapeth

Encompassed with fire; men
under heaven

Widely beheld him. 'Tis said that
he looks for⁴

55

The hoard in the earth, where old
he is guarding

The heathenish treasure; he'll be
nowise the better.

So three-hundred The dragon meets his
match.
winters the waster
of peoples

Held upon earth that excellent
hoard-hall,

Till the forementioned earlman
angered him bitterly:

60

The beat-plated beaker he bare to
his chieftain

And fullest remission for all his
remissness

Begged of his liegelord. Then the
hoard⁵ was discovered,

The treasure was taken, his
petition was
granted

The hero plunders the
dragon's den

The lorn-mooded
liegeman. His lord regarded

65

The old-work of earth-folk—'twas
the earliest occasion.

When the dragon awoke, the
strife was renewed there;

He snuffed 'long the stone then,
stout-hearted found he

The footprint of foeman; too far
had he gone

With cunning craftiness close to
the head of

70

The fire-spewing dragon. So
undoomed he may 'scape from

Anguish and exile with ease who
possesseth

The favor of Heaven. The hoard-
warden eagerly

Searched o'er the ground then,
would meet with the person

That caused him sorrow while in
slumber reclining:

75

Gleaming and wild he oft went
round the cavern,

All of it outward; not any of
earthmen

Was seen in that desert.⁶ Yet he
joyed in the battle,

Rejoiced in the conflict: oft he
turned to the barrow,

Sought for the gem-cup;^z this he
soon perceived
then

The dragon perceives that
some one has disturbed
his treasure.

80

That some man or
other had discovered the gold,

The famous folk-treasure. Not
fain did the hoard-ward

Wait until evening; then the ward
of the barrow

Was angry in spirit, the loathèd
one wished to

Pay for the dear-valued drink-
cup with fire.

85

Then the day was done as the
dragon would have it,

He no longer would wait on the
wall, but departed

Fire-impelled, The dragon is infuriated.
flaming. Fearful the start was

To earls in the land, as it early
thereafter

To their giver-of-gold was
grievously ended.

[1] For 'long-gestréona,' B. suggests 'láengestréona,' and renders, *Of fleeting treasures*. S. accepts H.'s 'long-gestréona,' but renders, *The treasure long in accumulating*.

[2] For 'hard-fyrdne' (2246), B. first suggested 'hard-fyndne,' rendering: *A heap of treasures ... so great that its*

equal would be hard to find. The same scholar suggests later 'hord-wynne dæl' = *A deal of treasure-joy.*

[3] Some read 'fec-word' (2247), and render: *Banning words uttered.*

[4] An earlier reading of H.'s gave the following meaning to this passage: *He is said to inhabit a mound under the earth, where he, etc.* The translation in the text is more authentic.

[5] The repetition of 'hord' in this passage has led some scholars to suggest new readings to avoid the second 'hord.' This, however, is not under the main stress, and, it seems to me, might easily be accepted.

[6] The reading of H.-So. is well defended in the notes to that volume. B. emends and renders: *Nor was there any man in that desert who rejoiced in conflict, in battle-work.* That is, the hoard-ward could not find any one who had disturbed his slumbers, for no warrior was there, t.B.'s emendation would give substantially the same translation.

[7] 'Sinc-fæt' (2301): this word both here and in v. 2232, t.B. renders 'treasure.'

XXXIII.

BRAVE THOUGH AGED.— REMINISCENCES.

The stranger The dragon spits fire.

began then to vomit forth fire,

To burn the great manor; the
blaze then glimmered

For anguish to earlmen, not
anything living

Was the hateful air-goer willing
to leave there.

5

The war of the worm widely was
noticed,

The feud of the foeman afar and
anear,

How the enemy injured the earls
of the Geatmen,

Harried with hatred: back he
hied to the treasure,

To the well-hidden cavern ere the
coming of daylight.

10

He had circled with fire the folk
of those regions,

With brand and burning; in the
barrow he trusted,

In the wall and his war-might:
the weening
deceived him.

Beowulf hears of the
havoc wrought by the
dragon.

Then straight was
the horror to
Beowulf published,

Early forsooth, that his own
native homestead,¹

15

The best of buildings, was
burning and melting,

Gift-seat of Geatmen. 'Twas a
grief to the spirit

Of the good-mooded hero, the
greatest of

SORROWS:

He fears that Heaven is
punishing him for some
crime.

The wise one
weened then that
wielding his kingdom

'Gainst the ancient
commandments, he had bitterly
angered

20

The Lord everlasting: with lorn
meditations

His bosom welled inward, as was
nowise his custom.

The fire-spewing dragon fully
had wasted

The fastness of warriors, the
water-land outward,

The manor with fire. The folk-
ruling hero,

25

Prince of the Weders, was
planning to wreak him.

The warmen's defender bade
them to make him,

Earlmen's atheling, an excellent
war-shield

Wholly of iron: He orders an iron shield
fully he knew then to be made from him,
wood is useless.

That wood from the forest was
helpless to aid him,

30

Shield against fire. The long-
worthy ruler

Must live the last of his limited
earth-days,

Of life in the world and the worm
along with him,

Though he long had been holding
hoard-wealth in
plenty.

He determines to fight
alone.

Then the ring-
prince disdained to seek with a
war-band,

35

With army extensive, the air-
going ranger;

He felt no fear of the foeman's
assaults and

He counted for little the might of
the dragon,

His power and prowess: for
previously dared
he

Beowulf's early triumphs
referred to

A heap of hostility,
hazarded dangers,

40

War-thane, when Hrothgar's
palace he cleansèd,

Conquering combatant, clutched
in the battle

The kinsmen of Grendel, of
kindred detested.²

'Twas of hand- Higelac's death recalled.
fights not least where Higelac
was slaughtered,

When the king of the Geatmen
with clashings of battle,

45

Friend-lord of folks in Frisian
dominions,

Offspring of Hrethrel perished
through sword-drink,

With battle-swords beaten;
thence Beowulf came then

On self-help relying, swam
through the waters;

He bare on his arm, lone-going,
thirty

Outfits of armor, when the ocean
he mounted.

The Hetwars by no means had
need to be boastful

Of their fighting afoot, who
forward to meet him

Carried their war-shields: not
many returned from

The brave-mooded battle-knight
back to their homesteads.

Ecgtheow's bairn o'er the bight-
courses swam then,

Lone-goer lorn to his land-folk
returning,

Where Hygd to him tendered
treasure and kingdom,

Rings and
dominion: her son
she not trusted,

Heardred's lack of
capacity to rule.

To be able to keep the kingdom
devised him

60

'Gainst alien races, on the death
of King Higelac.

Yet the sad ones
succeeded not in
persuading the atheling

Beowulf's tact and
delicacy recalled.

In any way ever, to act as a
suzerain

To Heardred, or promise to
govern the kingdom;

Yet with friendly counsel in the
folk he sustained him,

65

Gracious, with honor, till he grew
to be older,

Wielded the
Weders. Wide-
fleeing outlaws,

Reference is here made to
a visit which Beowulf
receives from Eanmund
and Eadgils, why they
come is not known.

Ohthere's sons, sought him o'er
the waters:

They had stirred a revolt 'gainst
the helm of the Scylfings,

The best of the sea-kings, who in
Swedish dominions

70

Distributed treasure,
distinguished folk-leader.

'Twas the end of his earth-days;
injury fatal³

By swing of the sword he
received as a greeting,

Offspring of Higelac;
Ongentheow's bairn

Later departed to visit his
homestead,

75

When Heardred was dead; let
Beowulf rule them,

Govern the Geatmen: good was
that folk-king.

[1] 'Hám' (2326), the suggestion of B. is accepted by t.B. and other scholars.

[2] For 'láðan cynnes' (2355), t.B. suggests 'láðan cynne,' apposition to 'mægum.' From syntactical and other considerations, this is a most excellent emendation.

[3] Gr. read 'on feorme' (2386), rendering: *He there at the banquet a fatal wound received by blows of the sword.*

XXXIV.

BEOWULF SEEKS THE DRAGON.—BEOWULF'S REMINISCENCES.

He planned requital for the folk-
leader's ruin

In days thereafter, to Eadgils the
wretched

Becoming an enemy. Ohthere's
son then

Went with a war-troop o'er the
wide-stretching currents

5

With warriors and weapons: with
woe-journeys cold he

After avenged him, the king's life
he took.

So he came off uninjured from all of his battles,

Beowulf has been preserved through many perils.

Perilous fights, offspring of Ecgtheow,

From his deeds of daring, till that day most momentous

10

When he fate-driven fared to fight with the dragon.

With eleven comrades, he seeks the dragon.

With eleven companions the prince of the Geatmen

Went lowering with fury to look at the fire-drake:

Inquiring he'd found how the feud had arisen,

Hate to his heroes; the highly-
famed gem-vessel

15

Was brought to his keeping
through the hand
of th' informer.

A guide leads the way,
but

That in the throng
was thirteenth of heroes,

That caused the beginning of
conflict so bitter,

Captive and wretched, must sad-
mooded
thenceward

very reluctantly.

Point out the place: he passed
then unwillingly

20

To the spot where he knew of the
notable cavern,

The cave under earth, not far
from the ocean,

The anger of eddies, which
inward was full of

Jewels and wires: a warden
uncanny,

Warrior weaponed, wardered the
treasure,

25

Old under earth; no easy
possession

For any of earth-folk access to get
to.

Then the battle-brave atheling
sat on the naze-edge,

While the gold-friend of Geatmen
gracious saluted

His fireside-companions: woe
was his spirit,

30

Death-boding, wav'ring; Weird
very near him,

Who must seize the old hero, his
soul-treasure look for,

Dragging aloof his life from his
body:

Not flesh-hidden long was the
folk-leader's spirit.

Beowulf spake,
Ecgtheow's son:

Beowulf's retrospect.

35

"I survived in my youth-days
many a conflict,

Hours of onset: that all I
remember.

I was seven-winters old when the
jewel-prince took me,

High-lord of heroes, at the hands
of my father,

Hrethel the hero-king had me in
keeping,

40

Hrethel took me when I
was seven.

Gave me treasure
and feasting, our kinship
remembered;

Not ever was I *any* less dear to
him

Knight in the He treated me as a son.
boroughs, than the bairns of his
household,

Herebald and Hæthcyn and
Higelac mine.

To the eldest unjustly by acts of a
kinsman

45

Was murder-bed strewn, since
him Hæthcyn from
horn-bow

One of the brothers
accidentally kills another.

His sheltering
chieftain shot with an arrow,

Erred in his aim and injured his
kinsman,

One brother the other, with
blood-sprinkled
spear:

No fee could compound
for such a calamity.

'Twas a feeless
fight, finished in malice,

50

Sad to his spirit; the folk-prince
however

Had to part from existence with
vengeance
untaken.

[A parallel case is
supposed.]

So to hoar-headed
hero 'tis heavily crushing¹

To live to see his son as he rideth
Young on the gallows: then
measures he chanteth,

55

A song of sorrow, when his son is
hanging

For the raven's delight, and aged
and hoary

He is unable to offer any
assistance.

Every morning his offspring's
departure

Is constant recalled: he cares not
to wait for

60

The birth of an heir in his
borough-enclosures,

Since that one through death-
pain the deeds hath experienced.

He heart-grieved beholds in the
house of his son the

Wine-building wasted, the wind-
lodging places

Reaved of their roaring; the
riders are sleeping,

65

The knights in the grave; there's
no sound of the harp-wood,

Joy in the yards, as of yore were
familiar.

[1] ‘Gomelum ceorle’ (2445).—H. takes these words as referring to Hrethel; but the translator here departs from his editor by understanding the poet to refer to a hypothetical old man, introduced as an illustration of a father’s sorrow.

Hrethrel had certainly never seen a son of his ride on the gallows to feed the crows.

The passage beginning ‘swá bið géomorlic’ seems to be an effort to reach a full simile, ‘as ... so.’ ‘As it is mournful for an old man, etc. ... so the defence of the Weders (2463) bore heart-sorrow, etc.’ The verses 2451 to 2463½ would be parenthetical, the poet’s feelings being so strong as to interrupt the simile. The punctuation of the fourth edition would be better—a comma after ‘galgan’ (2447). The translation may be indicated as follows: *(Just) as it is sad for an old man to see his son ride young on the gallows when he himself is uttering mournful measures, a sorrowful song, while his son hangs for a comfort to the raven, and he, old and infirm, cannot render him any kelp—(he is constantly reminded, etc., 2451-2463)—so the defence of the Weders, etc.*

XXXV.

REMINISCENCES (*CONTINUED*).—BEOWULF'S LAST BATTLE.

“He seeks then his chamber,
singeth a woe-song

One for the other; all too
extensive

Seemed homesteads and plains.

So the helm of the

Weders

Hrethel grieves for
Herebald.

Mindful of

Herebald heart-sorrow carried,

5

Stirred with emotion, nowise was
able

To wreak his ruin on the ruthless
destroyer:

He was unable to follow the
warrior with hatred,

With deeds that were direful,
though dear he not held him.

Then pressed by the pang this
pain occasioned him,

10

He gave up glee, God-light
elected;

He left to his sons, as the man
that is rich does,

His land and fortress, when from
life he departed.

Then was crime Strife between Swedes
and hostility 'twixt and Geats.
Swedes and Geatmen,

O'er wide-stretching water
warring was mutual,

15

Burdensome hatred, when
Hrethel had perished,

And Ongentheow's offspring
were active and valiant,

Wished not to hold to peace
oversea, but

Round Hreosna-beorh often
accomplished

Cruelest massacre. This my
kinsman avengèd,

20

The feud and fury, as 'tis found
on inquiry,

Though one of them paid it with
forfeit of life-joys,

With price that
was hard: the
struggle became then

Hæthcyn's fall at
Ravenswood.

Fatal to Hæthcyn, lord of the
Geatmen.

Then I heard that at morning one
brother the other

25

With edges of irons egged on to
murder,

Where Ongentheow maketh
onset on Eofor:

The helmet crashed, the hoary-
haired Scylfing

Sword-smitten fell, his hand then
remembered

Feud-hate sufficient, refused not
the death-blow.

The gems that he
gave me, with jewel-bright sword
I

'Quited in contest, as occasion
was offered:

Land he allowed me, life-joy at
homestead,

Manor to live on. Little he
needed

From Gepids or Danes or in
Sweden to look for

Trooper less true, with treasure
to buy him;

'Mong foot-soldiers ever in front
I would hie me,

Alone in the vanguard, and
evermore gladly

Warfare shall wage, while this
weapon endureth

That late and early often did
serve me

40

Beowulf refers to his
having slain Dæghrefn.

When I proved
before heroes the slayer of
Dæghrefn,

Knight of the Hugmen: he by no
means was suffered

To the king of the Frisians to
carry the jewels,

The breast-decoration; but the
banner-possessor

Bowed in the battle, brave-
mooded atheling.

No weapon was slayer, but war-
grapple broke then

The surge of his spirit, his body
destroying.

Now shall weapon's edge make
war for the treasure,

And hand and firm-sword.”

Beowulf spake then,

Boast-words uttered—the latest
occasion:

50

“I braved in my
youth-days battles
unnumbered;

He boasts of his youthful
prowess, and declares
himself still fearless.

Still am I willing the struggle to
look for,

Fame-deeds perform, folk-
warden prudent,

If the hateful despoiler forth
from his cavern

Seeketh me out!” Each of the
heroes,

55

Helm-bearers sturdy, he
thereupon greeted

Belovèd co- His last salutations.
liegemen—his last salutation:

“No brand would I bear, no blade
for the dragon,

Wist I a way my word-boast to
'com¹plish

Else with the monster, as with
Grendel I did it;

60

But fire in the battle hot I expect
there,

Furious flame-burning: so I fixed
on my body

Target and war-mail. The ward of
the barrow²

I'll not flee from a foot-length,
the foeman uncanny.

At the wall 'twill befall us as Fate
decreeth,

65

Let Fate decide between
us.

Each one's

Creator. I am eager in spirit,

With the wingèd war-hero to
away with all boasting.

Bide on the barrow with burnies
protected,

Earls in armor,
which of *us* two
may better

Wait ye here till the battle
is over.

Bear his disaster, when the battle
is over.

70

'Tis no matter of yours, and man
cannot do it,

But me and me only, to measure
his strength with

The monster of malice, might-
deeds to 'complish.

I with prowess shall gain the
gold, or the battle,

Direful death-woe will drag off
your ruler!"

75

The mighty champion rose by his
shield then,

Brave under helmet, in battle-
mail went he

'Neath steep-rising stone-cliffs,
the strength he relied on

Of one man alone: no work for a
coward.

Then he saw by the wall who a
great many battles

80

Had lived through, most worthy,
when foot-troops
collided,

The place of strife is
described.

Stone-arches
standing, stout-hearted
champion,

Saw a brook from the barrow
bubbling out thenceward:

The flood of the fountain was
fuming with war-flame:

Not nigh to the hoard, for season
the briefest

85

Could he brave, without burning,
the abyss that was yawning,

The drake was so fiery. The
prince of the Weders

Caused then that words came
from his bosom,

So fierce was his fury; the firm-
hearted shouted:

His battle-clear voice came in
resounding

90

'Neath the gray-colored stone.
Stirred was his
hatred,

Beowulf calls out under
the stone arches.

The hoard-ward
distinguished the speech of a
man;

Time was no longer to look out
for friendship.

The breath of the monster issued
forth first,

Vapory war-sweat, out of the
stone-cave:

95

The terrible encounter.

The earth re-
echoed. The earl 'neath the
barrow

Lifted his shield, lord of the
Geatmen,

Tow'rd the terrible stranger: the
ring-twisted creature's

Heart was then ready to seek for
a struggle.

The excellent Beowulf brandishes his
sword,
battle-king first
brandished his weapon,

100

The ancient heirloom, of edges
unblunted,³

To the death-planners twain was
terror from other.

The lord of the and stands against his
shield.
troopers intrepidly
stood then

'Gainst his high-rising shield,
when the dragon
coiled him

The dragon coils himself.

Quickly together: in corslet he
bided.

105

He went then in blazes, bended
and striding,

Hasting him forward. His life and
body

The targe well protected, for
time-period shorter

Than wish demanded for the
well-renowned leader,

Where he then for the first day
was forced to be victor,

110

Famous in battle, as Fate had not
willed it.

The lord of the Geatmen uplifted
his hand then,

Smiting the fire-drake with
sword that was precious,
That bright on the bone the
blade-edge did weaken,
Bit more feebly than his folk-
leader needed,

115

Burdened with bale-griefs. Then
the barrow-
protector,

The dragon rages

When the sword-blow had fallen,
was fierce in his spirit,

Flinging his fires, flamings of
battle

Gleamed then afar: the gold-
friend of Weders

Boasted no
conquests, his

Beowulf's sword fails
him.

battle-sword failed him

120

Naked in conflict, as by no means
it ought to,

Long-trusty weapon. 'Twas no
slight undertaking

That Ecgtheow's famous
offspring would leave

The drake-cavern's bottom; he
must live in some region

Other than this, by the will of the
dragon,

125

As each one of earthmen
existence must forfeit.

'Twas early thereafter the
excellent warriors

Met with each The combat is renewed.
other. Anew and afresh

The hoard-ward took heart
(gasps heaved
then his bosom):

The great hero is reduced
to extremities.

Sorrow he suffered
encircled with fire

130

Who the people erst governed.
His companions by no means

Were banded about him, bairns
of the princes,

With valorous His comrades flee!
spirit, but they sped to the forest,

Seeking for safety. The soul-
deeps of one were

Ruffled by care: Blood is thicker than
water.

kin-love can never

135

Aught in him waver who well
doth consider.

[1] The clause 2520(2)-2522(1), rendered by 'Wist I ... monster,' Gr., followed by S., translates substantially as follows: *If I knew how else I might combat the boastful defiance of the monster.*—The translation turns upon 'wiðgrípan,' a word not understood.

[2] B. emends and translates: *I will not flee the space of a foot from the guard of the barrow, but there shall be to us a fight at the wall, as fate decrees, each one's Creator.*

[3] The translation of this passage is based on 'unsláw' (2565), accepted by H.-So., in lieu of the long-standing 'ungléaw.' The former is taken as an adj. limiting 'sweord'; the latter as an adj. c. 'gúð-cyning': *The good war-king, rash with edges, brandished his sword, his old relic.* The latter gives a more rhetorical Anglo-Saxon (poetical) sentence.

XXXVI.

WIGLAF THE TRUSTY.— BEOWULF IS DESERTED BY FRIENDS AND BY SWORD.

Wiglaf remains true—the
ideal Teutonic liegeman.

The son of

Weohstan was Wiglaf entitled,

Shield-warrior precious, prince
of the Scylfings,

Ælfhere's kinsman: he saw his
dear liegelord

Enduring the heat 'neath helmet
and visor.

5

Then he minded the holding that
erst he had given
him,

Wiglaf recalls Beowulf's
generosity.

The Wægmunding

warriors' wealth-blessèd
homestead,

Each of the folk-rights his father
had wielded;

He was hot for the battle, his
hand seized the target,

The yellow-bark shield, he
unsheathed his old weapon,

10

Which was known among
earthmen as the relic of
Eanmund,

Ohthere's offspring, whom,
exiled and friendless,

Weohstan did slay with sword-
edge in battle,

And carried his kinsman the
clear-shining helmet,

The ring-made burnie, the old
giant-weapon

15

That Onela gave him, his boon-
fellow's armor,

Ready war-trappings: he the feud
did not mention,

Though he'd fatally smitten the
son of his brother.

Many a half-year held he the
treasures,

The bill and the burnie, till his
bairn became able,

20

Like his father before him, fame-
deeds to 'complish;

Then he gave him 'mong
Geatmen a goodly array of

Weeds for his warfare; he went
from life then

Old on his journey. 'Twas the
earliest time then

That the youthful
champion might
charge in the
battle

This is Wiglaf's first
battle as liegeman of
Beowulf.

25

Aiding his liegelord; his spirit
was dauntless.

Nor did kinsman's bequest quail
at the battle:

This the dragon discovered on
their coming together.

Wiglaf uttered many a right-
saying,

Said to his fellows, sad was his
spirit:

30

Wiglaf appeals to the
pride of the cowards.

“I remember the
time when, tasting the mead-cup,

We promised in the hall the lord
of us all

Who gave us these ring-
treasures, that this battle-
equipment,

Swords and helmets, we’d
certainly quite him,

Should need of such aid ever
befall him:

35

How we have forfeited
our liegelord’s
confidence!

In the war-band
he chose us for

this journey spontaneously,

Stirred us to glory and gave me
these jewels,

Since he held and esteemed us
trust-worthy spearmen,

Hardy helm-bearers, though this
hero-achievement

Our lord intended alone to
accomplish,

40

Ward of his people, for most of
achievements,

Doings audacious, he did among
earth-folk.

The day is now
come when the
ruler of earthmen

Our lord is in sore need
of us.

Needeth the vigor of valiant
heroes:

Let us wend us towards him, the
war-prince to succor,

45

While the heat yet rageth,
horrible fire-fight.

God wot in me, 'tis I would rather die than
mickle the liefer go home with out my
suzerain.

The blaze should embrace my
body and eat it

With my treasure-bestower.
Meseemeth not proper

To bear our battle-shields back to
our country,

50

'Less first we are able to fell and
destroy the

Long-hating foeman, to defend
the life of

The prince of the
Weders. Well do I
know 't isn't

Surely he does not
deserve to die alone.

Earned by his exploits, he only of
Geatmen

Sorrow should suffer, sink in the
battle:

55

Brand and helmet to us both
shall be common,

Shield-cover, burnie." Through
the bale-smoke he stalked then,

Went under helmet to the help of
his chieftain,

Briefly
discoursing:

Wiglaf reminds Beowulf
of his youthful boasts.

“Beowulf dear,

Perform thou all fully, as thou
formerly saidst,

60

In thy youthful years, that while
yet thou livedst

Thou wouldst let thine honor not
ever be lessened.

Thy life thou shalt save, mighty
in actions,

Atheling undaunted, with all of
thy vigor;

I'll give thee
assistance.” The
dragon came raging,

The monster advances on
them.

65

Wild-mooded stranger, when
these words had been uttered

('Twas the second occasion),
seeking his enemies,

Men that were hated, with hot-
gleaming fire-waves;

With blaze-billows burned the
board to its edges:

The fight-armor failed then to
furnish assistance

70

To the youthful spear-hero: but
the young-agèd stripling

Quickly advanced 'neath his
kinsman's war-target,

Since his own had been ground
in the grip of the fire.

Then the warrior- Beowulf strikes at the
dragon.
king was careful of
glory,

He soundly smote with sword-
for-the-battle,

75

That it stood in the head by
hatred driven;

Nægling was shivered, the old
and iron-made

Brand of Beowulf His sword fails him.
in battle deceived him.

'Twas denied him that edges of
irons were able

To help in the battle; the hand
was too mighty

80

²Which every weapon, as I heard
on inquiry,

Outstruck in its stroke, when to
struggle he carried

The wonderful war-sword: it
waxed him no
better.

The dragon advances on
Beowulf again.

Then the people-
despoiler—third of his onsets—

Fierce-raging fire-drake, of feud-
hate was mindful,

85

Charged on the strong one, when
chance was afforded,

Heated and war-grim, seized on
his neck

With teeth that were bitter; he
bloody did wax with

Soul-gore seething; sword-blood in waves boiled.

[1] The passage ‘*Brand ... burnie,*’ is much disputed. In the first place, some eminent critics assume a gap of at least two half-verses.—‘*Úrum*’ (2660), being a peculiar form, has been much discussed. ‘*Byrdu-scrúd*’ is also a crux. B. suggests ‘*býwdu-scrúd*’ = *splendid vestments*. Nor is ‘*bám*’ accepted by all, ‘*béon*’ being suggested. Whatever the individual words, the passage must mean, “*I intend to share with him my equipments of defence.*”

[2] B. would render: *Which, as I heard, excelled in stroke every sword that he carried to the strife, even the strongest (sword).* For ‘*Þonne*’ he reads ‘*Þone,*’ rel. pr.

XXXVII.

THE FATAL STRUGGLE.— BEOWULF'S LAST MOMENTS.

Wiglaf defends Beowulf.

Then I heard that at need of the
king of the people

The upstanding earlman
exhibited prowess,

Vigor and courage, as suited his
nature;

He his head did not guard, but
the high-minded liegeman's

5

Hand was consumed, when he
succored his kinsman,

So he struck the strife-bringing
strange-comer lower,

Earl-thane in armor, that *in* went
the weapon

Gleaming and plated, that 'gan
then the fire²

Later to lessen. Beowulf draws his knife,
The liegelord himself then

10

Retained his consciousness,
brandished his war-knife,

Battle-sharp, bitter, that he bare
on his armor:

The Weder-lord and cuts the dragon.
cut the worm in the middle.

They had felled the enemy (life
drove out then³

Puissant prowess), the pair had
destroyed him,

15

Land-chiefs related: so a
liegeman should prove him,
A thaneman when needed. To the
prince 'twas the last of
His era of conquest by his own
great achievements,

The latest of
world-deeds. The
wound then began

Beowulf's wound swells
and burns.

Which the earth-dwelling dragon
erstwhile had wrought him

20

To burn and to swell. He soon
then discovered

That bitterest bale-woe in his
bosom was raging,

Poison within. The atheling
advanced then,

That along by the He sits down exhausted.
wall, he prudent of spirit

Might sit on a settle; he saw the
giant-work,

25

How arches of stone
strengthened with pillars

The earth-hall eternal inward
supported.

Then the long-worthy liegeman
laved with his
hand the

Wiglaf bathes his lord's
head.

Far-famous
chieftain, gory from sword-edge,

Refreshing the face of his friend-
lord and ruler,

Sated with battle, unbinding his
helmet.

Beowulf answered, of his injury
spake he,

His wound that was fatal (he was
fully aware

He had lived his allotted life-days
enjoying

The pleasures of earth; then past
was entirely

His measure of days, death very
near):

“My son I would
give now my
battle-equipments,

Beowulf regrets that he
has no son.

Had any of heirs been after me
granted,

Along of my body. This people I
governed

Fifty of winters: no king 'mong
my neighbors

40

Dared to encounter me with
comrades-in-battle,

Try me with terror. The time to
me ordered

I bided at home, mine own kept
fitly,

Sought me no snares, swore me
not many

Oaths in injustice. I can rejoice in a well-
Joy over all this spent life.

45

I'm able to have, though ill with
my death-wounds;

Hence the Ruler of Earthmen
need not charge me

With the killing of kinsmen,
when cometh my life out

Forth from my body. Fare thou
with haste now

To behold the
hoard 'neath the
hoar-grayish
stone,

Bring me the hoard,
Wiglaf, that my dying
eyes may be refreshed by
a sight of it.

50

Well-lovèd Wiglaf, now the worm
is a-lying,

Sore-wounded sleepeth,
disseized of his treasure.

Go thou in haste that treasures of
old I,

Gold-wealth may gaze on,
together see lying

The ether-bright jewels, be easier
able,

55

Having the heap of hoard-gems,
to yield my

Life and the land-folk whom long
I have governed.”

[1] B. renders: *He (W.) did not regard his (the dragon's) head (since Beowulf had struck it without effect), but struck the dragon a little lower down.*—One crux is to find out *whose head* is meant; another is to bring out the antithesis between ‘head’ and ‘hand.’

[2] ‘*Þæt þæt fýr*’ (2702), S. emends to ‘*þá þæt fýr*’ = *when the fire began to grow less intense afterward*. This emendation relieves the passage of a plethora of conjunctive *þæt*’s.

[3] For ‘*gefyldan*’ (2707), S. proposes ‘*gefylde*.’ The passage would read: *He felled the foe (life drove out strength), and*

they then both had destroyed him, chieftains related. This gives Beowulf the credit of having felled the dragon; then they combine to annihilate him.—For ‘ellen’ (2707), Kl. suggests ‘e(a)llne.’—The reading ‘*life drove out strength*’ is very unsatisfactory and very peculiar. I would suggest as follows: Adopt S.’s emendation, remove H.’s parenthesis, read ‘ferh-ellen wræc,’ and translate: *He felled the foe, drove out his life-strength* (that is, made him hors de combat), and then they both, etc.

XXXVIII.

WIGLAF PLUNDERS THE DRAGON'S DEN.—BEOWULF'S DEATH.

Then heard I that Wiglaf fulfils his lord's
behest.
Wihstan's son very
quickly,

These words being uttered,
heeded his liegelord

Wounded and war-sick, went in
his armor,

His well-woven ring-mail, 'neath
the roof of the barrow.

5

Then the trusty retainer treasure-
gems many

Victorious saw, The dragon's den.
when the seat he came near to,

Gold-treasure sparkling spread
on the bottom,

Wonder on the wall, and the
worm-creature's cavern,

The ancient dawn-flier's, vessels
a-standing,

10

Cups of the ancients of cleansers
bereavèd,

Robbed of their ornaments: there
were helmets in numbers,

Old and rust-eaten, arm-
bracelets many,

Artfully woven. Wealth can
easily,

Gold on the sea-bottom, turn into
vanity¹

15

Each one of earthmen, arm him
who pleaseth!

And he saw there lying an all-
golden banner

High o'er the hoard, of hand-
wonders greatest,

Linkèd with lacets: a light from it
sparkled,

That the floor of the cavern he
was able to look

on,

The dragon is not there.

20

To examine the jewels. Sight of
the dragon

Not any was offered, but edge
offcarried him.

Then I heard that Wiglaf bears the hoard
the hero the away.
hoard-treasure plundered,

The giant-work ancient reaved in
the cavern,

Bare on his bosom the beakers
and platters,

25

As himself would fain have it,
and took off the standard,

The brightest of beacons;² the bill
had erst injured

(Its edge was of iron), the old-
ruler's weapon,

Him who long had watched as
ward of the jewels,

Who fire-terror carried hot for
the treasure,

Rolling in battle, in middlemost
darkness,

Till murdered he perished. The
messenger hastened,

Not loth to return, hurried by
jewels:

Curiosity urged him if, excellent-
mooded,

Alive he should find the lord of
the Weders

Mortally wounded, at the place
where he left him.

'Mid the jewels he found then the
famous old chieftain,

His liegelord belovèd, at his
life's-end gory:

He thereupon 'gan to lave him
with water,

Till the point of his word piercèd
his breast-hoard.

40

Beowulf spake (the gold-gems he
noticed),

The old one in
sorrow: “For the
jewels I look on

Beowulf is rejoiced to see
the jewels.

Thanks do I utter for all to the
Ruler,

Wielder of Worship, with words
of devotion,

The Lord everlasting, that He let
me such treasures

45

Gain for my people ere death
overtook me.

Since I've bartered the aged life
to me granted

For treasure of jewels, attend ye
henceforward

The wants of the
war-thanes; I can
wait here no longer.

He desires to be held in
memory by his people.

The battle-famed bid ye to build
them a grave-hill,

50

Bright when I'm burned, at the
brim-current's limit;

As a memory-mark to the men I
have governed,

Aloft it shall tower on Whale's-
Ness uprising,

That earls of the ocean hereafter
may call it

Beowulf's barrow, those who
barks ever-dashing

55

From a distance shall drive o'er
the darkness of
waters.”

The hero's last gift

The bold-mooded troop-lord
took from his neck then

The ring that was golden, gave to
his liegeman,

The youthful war-hero, his gold-
flashing helmet,

His collar and war-mail, bade
him well to enjoy them:

“Thou art latest
left of the line of our kindred,
Of Wægmunding people: Weird
hath offcarried

All of my kinsmen to the
Creator’s glory,

Earls in their vigor: I shall after
them fare.”

’Twas the aged liegelord’s last-
spoken word in

His musings of spirit, ere he
mounted the fire,

The battle-waves burning: from
his bosom departed

His soul to seek the sainted ones’
glory.

[1] The word ‘oferhígian’ (2767) being vague and little understood, two quite distinct translations of this passage have arisen. One takes ‘oferhígian’ as meaning ‘to exceed,’ and, inserting ‘hord’ after ‘gehwoe,’ renders: *The treasure may easily, the gold in the ground, exceed in value every hoard of man, hide it who will.* The other takes ‘oferhígian’ as meaning ‘to render arrogant,’ and, giving the sentence a moralizing tone, renders substantially as in the body of this work. (Cf. [28 13](#) et seq.)

[2] The passage beginning here is very much disputed. ‘The bill of the old lord’ is by some regarded as Beowulf’s sword; by others, as that of the ancient possessor of the hoard. ‘Ær gescód’ (2778), translated in this work as verb and adverb, is by some regarded as a compound participial adj. = *sheathed in brass.*

XXXIX.

THE DEAD FOES.—WIGLAF'S BITTER TAUNTS.

It had wofully
chanced then the
youthful retainer

Wiglaf is sorely grieved to
see his lord look so un-
warlike.

To behold on earth the most
ardent-belovèd

At his life-days' limit, lying there
helpless.

The slayer too lay there, of life all
bereavèd,

5

Horrible earth-drake, harassed
with sorrow:

The round-twisted monster was
permitted no longer

The dragon has
plundered his last hoard.

To govern the ring-hoards, but
edges of war-swords

Mightily seized him, battle-
sharp, sturdy

Leavings of hammers, that still
from his wounds

10

The flier-from-farland fell to the
earth

Hard by his hoard-house, hopped
he at midnight

Not e'er through the air, nor
exulting in jewels

Suffered them to see him: but he
sank then to earthward

Through the hero-chief's
handwork. I heard sure it throve
then

But few in the land
of liegemen of valor,

Though of every achievement
bold he had proved him,

To run 'gainst the breath of the
venomous scather,

Or the hall of the treasure to
trouble with hand-blows,

If he watching had found the
ward of the hoard-hall

On the barrow abiding. Beowulf's
part of

The treasure of jewels was paid
for with death;

Each of the twain had attained to
the end of

Life so unlasting. Not long was
the time till

The tardy-at-battle The cowardly thanes
come out of the thicket.
returned from the
thicket,

25

The timid truce-breakers ten all
together,

Who durst not before play with
the lances

In the prince of the people's
pressing
emergency;

They are ashamed of
their desertion.

But blushing with
shame, with shields they betook
them,

With arms and armor where the
old one was lying:

30

They gazed upon Wiglaf. He was
sitting exhausted,

Foot-going fighter, not far from
the shoulders

Of the lord of the people, would
rouse him with water;

No whit did it help him; though
he hoped for it keenly,

He was able on earth not at all in
the leader

35

Life to retain, and nowise to alter

The will of the Wielder; the
World-Ruler's power¹

Would govern the actions of each
one of heroes,

As yet He is doing. Wiglaf is ready to
excoriate them.

From the young
one forthwith then

Could grim-worded greeting be
got for him quickly

40

Whose courage had failed him.
Wiglaf discoursed then,

Weohstan his son, sad-mooded
hero,

Looked on the He begins to taunt them.
hated: "He who soothness will
utter

Can say that the liegelord who
gave you the jewels,

The ornament-armor wherein ye
are standing,

45

When on ale-bench often he
offered to hall-men

Helmet and burnie, the prince to
his liegemen,

As best upon earth he was able to
find him,—

That he wildly
wasted his war-
gear undoubtedly

Surely our lord wasted
his armor on poltroons.

When battle o'ertook him.² The
troop-king no need had

50

To glory in comrades; yet God
permitted him,

Victory-Wielder, He, however, got along
with weapon without you
unaided

Himself to avenge, when vigor
was needed.

I life-protection but little was
able

To give him in battle, and I 'gan,
notwithstanding,

55

With some aid, I could
have saved our liegelord

Helping my
kinsman (my strength
overtaxing):

He waxed the weaker when with
weapon I smote on

My mortal opponent, the fire less
strongly

Flamed from his bosom. Too few
of protectors

Came round the king at the
critical moment.

60

Now must
ornament-taking
and weapon-bestowing,

Gift-giving is over with
your people: the ring-lord
is dead.

Home-joyance all, cease for your
kindred,

Food for the people; each of your
warriors

Must needs be bereavèd of rights
that he holdeth

In landed possessions, when
faraway nobles

65

Shall learn of your leaving your
lord so basely,

The dastardly
deed. Death is
more pleasant

What is life without
honor?

To every earlman than infamous
life is!”

[1] For ‘dædum rædan’ (2859) B. suggests ‘déað árædan,’ and renders: *The might (or judgment) of God would determine death for every man, as he still does.*

[2] Some critics, H. himself in earlier editions, put the clause, ‘When ... him’ (A.-S. ‘þá ... beget’) with the following sentence; that is, they make it dependent upon ‘þorfte’ (2875) instead of upon ‘forwurpe’ (2873).

XL.

THE MESSENGER OF DEATH.

Wiglaf sends the news of
Beowulf's death to
liegemen near by.

Then he charged
that the battle be
announced at the hedge

Up o'er the cliff-edge, where the
earl-troopers bided

The whole of the morning, mood-
wretched sat them,

Bearers of battle-shields, both
things expecting,

5

The end of his lifetime and the
coming again of

The liegelord belovèd. Little
reserved he

Of news that was known, who the
ness-cliff did travel,

But he truly discoursed to all that
could hear him:

“Now the free- The messenger speaks.
giving friend-lord of the folk of
the Weders,

10

The folk-prince of Geatmen, is
fast in his death-bed,

By the deeds of the dragon in
death-bed abideth;

Along with him lieth his life-
taking foeman

Slain with knife-wounds: he was
wholly unable

To injure at all the ill-planning
monster

15

Wiglaf sits by our dead
lord.

With bite of his
sword-edge. Wiglaf is sitting,

Offspring of Wihstan, up over
Beowulf,

Earl o'er another whose end-day
hath reached him,

Head-watch holdeth o'er heroes
unliving,¹

For friend and for foeman. The folk
now expecteth

Our lord's death will lead
to attacks from our old
foes.

20

A season of strife when the death
of the folk-king

To Frankmen and Frisians in far-
lands is published.

The war-hatred waxed warm
'gainst the
Hugmen,

Higelac's death recalled.

When Higelac came with an army
of vessels

Faring to Friesland, where the
Frankmen in battle

25

Humbled him and bravely with
overnight 'complished

That the mail-clad warrior must
sink in the battle,

Fell 'mid his folk-troop: no fret-
gems presented

The atheling to earlmen; aye was
denied us

Merewing's mercy. The men of
the Swedelands

30

For truce or for truth trust I but
little;

But widely 'twas known that near
Ravenswood
Ongentheow

Hæthcyn's fall referred
to.

Sundered

Hæthcyn the Hrethling from life-
joys,

When for pride overweening the
War-Scylfings first did

Seek the Geatmen with savage
intentions.

35

Early did Ohthere's age-laden
father,

Old and terrible, give blow in
requital,

Killing the sea-king, the queen-
mother rescued,

The old one his consort deprived
of her gold,

Onela's mother and Ohthere's
also,

40

And then followed the feud-
nursing foemen till hardly,

Reaved of their ruler, they
Ravenswood entered.

Then with vast-numbered forces
he assaulted the remnant,

Weary with wounds, woe often
promised

The livelong night to the sad-
hearted war-troop:

45

Said he at morning would kill
them with edges of weapons,

Some on the gallows for glee to
the fowls.

Aid came after to the anxious-in-
spirit

At dawn of the day, after
Higelac's bugle

And trumpet-sound heard they,
when the good one proceeded

50

And faring followed the flower of
the troopers.

[1] 'Hige-méðum' (2910) is glossed by H. as dat. plu. (= for the dead). S. proposes 'hige-méðe,' nom. sing. limiting Wigláf; i.e. *W., mood-weary, holds head-watch o'er friend and foe.*—B. suggests taking the word as dat. inst. plu. of an

abstract noun in -'u.' The translation would be substantially the same as S.'s.

XLI.

THE MESSENGER'S RETROSPECT.

The messenger continues, and refers to the feuds of Swedes and Geats.

“The blood-
stained trace of Swedes and
Geatmen,

The death-rush of warmen,
widely was noticed,

How the folks with each other
feud did awaken.

The worthy one went then¹ with
well-beloved comrades,

5

Old and dejected to go to the
fastness,

Ongentho earl upward then
turned him;

Of Higelac's battle he'd heard on
inquiry,

The exultant one's prowess,
despaired of resistance,

With earls of the ocean to be able
to struggle,

10

'Gainst sea-going sailors to save
the hoard-treasure,

His wife and his children; he fled
after thenceward

Old 'neath the earth-wall. Then
was offered pursuance

To the braves of the Swedemen,
the banner² to Higelac.

They fared then forth o'er the
field-of-protection,

When the Hrethling heroes
 hedgeward had thronged them.

Then with edges of irons was
 Ongentheow driven,

The gray-haired to tarry, that the
 troop-ruler had to

Suffer the power
 solely of Eofor:

Wulf wounds
 Ongentheow.

Wulf then wildly
 with weapon assaulted him,

Wonred his son, that for swinge
 of the edges

The blood from his body burst
 out in currents,

Forth 'neath his hair. He feared
 not however,

Gray-headed Scylfing, but
speedily quited

The wasting
wound-stroke with
worse exchange,

Ongentheow gives a stout
blow in return.

25

When the king of the thane-troop
thither did turn him:

The wise-mooded son of Wonred
was powerless

To give a return-blow to the age-
hoary man,

But his head-shielding helmet
first hewed he to pieces,

That flecked with gore perforce
he did totter,

30

Fell to the earth; not fey was he
yet then,

But up did he spring though an
edge-wound had
reached him.

Eofor smites Ongentheow
fiercely.

Then Higelac's
vassal, valiant and dauntless,

When his brother lay dead, made
his broad-bladed weapon,

Giant-sword ancient, defence of
the giants,

35

Bound o'er the shield-wall; the
folk-prince
succumbed then,

Ongentheow is slain.

Shepherd of people, was pierced
to the vitals.

There were many attendants who
bound up his kinsman,
Carried him quickly when
occasion was granted
That the place of the slain they
were suffered to manage.

40

This pending, one hero
plundered the other,
His armor of iron from
Ongentheow ravished,
His hard-sword hilted and
helmet together;

The old one's
equipments he
carried to Higelac.

Eofor takes the old king's
war-gear to Higelac.

He the jewels received, and
rewards 'mid the troopers

Graciously promised, and so did
accomplish:

The king of the Weders requited
the war-rush,

Hrethel's descendant, when
home he repaired
him,

Higelac rewards the
brothers.

To Eofor and Wulf
with wide-lavished treasures,

To each of them granted a
hundred of thousands

50

In land and rings wrought out of
wire:

None upon mid-
earth needed to
twit him³

His gifts were beyond
cavil.

With the gifts he gave them,
when glory they
conquered;

To Eofor he also gives his
only daughter in
marriage.

And to Eofor then
gave he his one
only daughter,

The honor of home, as an earnest
of favor.

55

That's the feud and hatred—as
ween I 'twill happen—

The anger of earthmen, that earls
of the Swedemen

Will visit on us, when they hear
that our leader

Lifeless is lying, he who longtime
protected

His hoard and kingdom 'gainst
hating assailers,

60

Who on the fall of the heroes
defended of yore

The deed-mighty Scyldings,⁴ did
for the troopers

What best did avail them, and
further moreover

Hero-deeds
'complished. Now
is haste most
fitting,

It is time for us to pay the
last marks of respect to
our lord.

That the lord of liegemen we look
upon yonder,

65

And *that* one carry on journey to
death-pyre

Who ring-presents gave us. Not
aught of it all

Shall melt with the brave one—
there's a mass of bright jewels,

Gold beyond measure,
grewsomenely purchased

And ending it all ornament-rings
too

70

Bought with his life; these fire
shall devour,

Flame shall cover, no earlman
shall wear

A jewel-memento, nor beautiful
virgin

Have on her neck rings to adorn
her,

But wretched in spirit bereavèd
of gold-gems

75

She shall oft with others be exiled
and banished,

Since the leader of liegemen hath
laughter forsaken,

Mirth and merriment. Hence
many a war-spear

Cold from the morning shall be
clutched in the fingers,

Heaved in the hand, no harp-
music's sound shall

80

Waken the warriors, but the wan-
coated raven

Fain over fey ones freely shall
gabble,

Shall say to the eagle how he
sped in the eating,

When, the wolf his companion,
he plundered the slain.”

So the high-minded hero was
rehearsing these stories

85

Loathsome to hear; he lied as to
few of

Weirds and of words. All the war-
troop arose then,

The warriors go sadly to
look at Beowulf's lifeless
body.

'Neath the Eagle's Cape sadly
betook them,

Weeping and woful, the wonder
to look at.

They saw on the sand then
soulless a-lying,

90

His slaughter-bed holding, him
who rings had given them

In days that were done; then the
death-bringing moment

Was come to the good one, that
the king very warlike,

Wielder of Weders, with wonder-
death perished.

First they beheld there a creature
more wondrous,

95

They also see the dragon.

The worm on the
field, in front of them lying,

The foeman before them: the
fire-spewing dragon,

Ghostly and grisly guest in his
terrors,

Was scorched in the fire; as he
lay there he measured

Fifty of feet; came forth in the
night-time^s

100

To rejoice in the air, thereafter
departing

To visit his den; he in death was
then fastened,

He would joy in no other earth-
hollowed caverns.

There stood round about him
beakers and vessels,

Dishes were lying and dear-
valued weapons,

105

With iron-rust eaten, as in earth's
mighty bosom

A thousand of winters there they
had rested:

That mighty The hoard was under a
magic spell.
bequest then with
magic was guarded,

Gold of the ancients, that
earlman not any

The ring-hall could touch, save
Ruling-God only,

110

Sooth-king of Vict'ries gave
whom He wished
to

God alone could give
access to it.
Ⓞ(He is earth-folk's
protector) to open the treasure,

E'en to such among mortals as seemed to Him proper.

[1] For 'góða,' which seems a surprising epithet for a Geat to apply to the "terrible" Ongentheow, B. suggests 'gomela.' The passage would then stand: *'The old one went then,' etc.*

[2] For 'segn Higeláce,' K., Th., and B. propose 'segn Higeláces,' meaning: *Higelac's banner followed the Swedes (in pursuit).*—S. suggests 'sæcc Higeláces,' and renders: *Higelac's pursuit.*—The H.-So. reading, as translated in our text, means that the banner of the enemy was captured and brought to Higelac as a trophy.

[3] The rendering given in this translation represents the king as being generous beyond the possibility of reproach; but some authorities construe 'him' (2996) as plu., and understand the passage to mean that no one reproached the two brothers with having received more reward than they were entitled to.

[4] The name 'Scyldingas' here (3006) has caused much discussion, and given rise to several theories, the most important of which are as follows: (1) After the downfall of Hrothgar's family, Beowulf was king of the Danes, or Scyldings. (2) For 'Scyldingas' read 'Scylfingas'—that is, after killing Eadgils, the Scylfing prince, Beowulf conquered his land, and held it in subjection. (3) M. considers 3006 a thoughtless repetition of 2053. (Cf. H.-So.)

[5] B. takes 'nihtes' and 'hwílum' (3045) as separate adverbial cases, and renders: *Joy in the air had he of yore by night, etc.* He thinks that the idea of vanished time ought to be expressed.

[6] The parenthesis is by some emended so as to read: (1) *(He (i.e. God) is the hope of men);* (2) *(he is the hope of heroes).* Gr.'s reading has no parenthesis, but says: ... *could*

touch, unless God himself, true king of victories, gave to whom he would to open the treasure, the secret place of enchanters, etc. The last is rejected on many grounds.

XLII.

WIGLAF'S SAD STORY.—THE HOARD CARRIED OFF.

Then 'twas seen that the journey
prospered him little

Who wrongly within had the
ornaments hidden¹

Down 'neath the wall. The
warden erst slaughtered

Some few of the folk-troop: the
feud then thereafter

5

Was hotly avengèd. 'Tis a wonder
where,²

When the strength-famous
trooper has attained to the end of

Life-days allotted, then no longer
the man may

Remain with his kinsmen where
mead-cups are flowing.

So to Beowulf happened when
the ward of the barrow,

10

Assaults, he sought for: himself
had no knowledge

How his leaving this life was
likely to happen.

So to doomsday, famous folk-
leaders down did

Call it with curses—who
'complished it there—

That that man should be ever of
ill-deeds convicted,

Confined in foul-places, fastened
in hell-bonds,

Punished with plagues, who this
place should e'er ravage.³

He cared not for gold: rather the
Wielder's

Favor preferred he first to get
sight of.⁴

Wiglaf discoursed Wiglaf addresses his
comrades.
then, Wihstan his
son:

“Oft many an earlman on one
man's account must

Sorrow endure, as to us it hath
happened.

The liegelord belovèd we could
little prevail on,

Kingdom's keeper, counsel to
follow,

Not to go to the guardian of the
gold-hoard, but let him

25

Lie where he long was, live in his
dwelling

Till the end of the world. Met we
a destiny

Hard to endure: the hoard has
been looked at,

Been gained very grimly; too
grievous the fate that⁵

The prince of the people pricked
to come thither.

30

I was therein and all of it looked
at,

The building's equipments, since
access was given me,

Not kindly at all entrance
permitted

Within under He tells them of
Beowulf's last moments.
earth-wall. Hastily
seized I

And held in my hands a huge-
weighing burden

35

Of hoard-treasures costly, hither
out bare them

To my liegelord beloved: life was
yet in him,

And consciousness also; the old
one discoursed then

Much and mournfully,
commanded to
greet you,

Beowulf's dying request.

Bade that remembering the
deeds of your friend-lord

40

Ye build on the fire-hill of
corpses a lofty

Burial-barrow, broad and far-
famous,

As 'mid world-dwelling warriors
he was widely most honored

While he reveled in riches. Let us
rouse us and hasten

Again to see and seek for the
treasure,

45

The wonder 'neath wall. The way
I will show you,

That close ye may look at ring-
gems sufficient

And gold in abundance. Let the
bier with promptness

Fully be fashioned, when forth
we shall come,

And lift we our lord, then, where
long he shall tarry,

50

Well-beloved warrior, 'neath the
Wielder's
protection.”

Wiglaf charges them to
build a funeral-pyre.

Then the son of
Wihstan bade orders be given,
Mood-valiant man, to many of
heroes,

Holders of homesteads, that they
 hither from far,

Leaders of liegemen, should look
 for the good one

55

With wood for his pyre: “The
 flame shall now swallow

(The wan fire shall wax^z) the
 warriors’ leader

Who the rain of the iron often
 abided,

When, sturdily hurled, the storm
 of the arrows

Leapt o’er linden-wall, the lance
 rendered service,

60

Furnished with feathers followed
 the arrow.”

Now the wise-mooded son of
Wihstan did summon

The best of the braves from the
band of the ruler

Seven together; He takes seven thanes,
'neath the enemy's and enters the den.
roof he

Went with the seven; one of the
heroes

65

Who fared at the front, a fire-
blazing torch-light

Bare in his hand. No lot then
decided

Who that hoard should havoc,
when hero-earls saw it

Lying in the cavern uncared-for
entirely,

Rusting to ruin: they rued then
but little

70

That they hastily hence hauled
out the treasure,

The dear-valued They push the dragon
over the wall.
jewels; the dragon
eke pushed they,

The worm o'er the wall, let the
wave-currents take him,

The waters enwind the ward of
the treasures.

There wounden The hoard is laid on a
wain.
gold on a wain was
uploaded,

75

A mass unmeasured, the men-
leader off then,

The hero hoary, to Whale's-Ness
was carried.

[1] For 'gehýdde,' B. suggests 'gehýðde': the passage would stand as above except the change of 'hidden' (v. 2) to 'plundered.' The reference, however, would be to the thief, not to the dragon.

[2] The passage 'Wundur ... búan' (3063-3066), M. took to be a question asking whether it was strange that a man should die when his appointed time had come.—B. sees a corruption, and makes emendations introducing the idea that a brave man should not die from sickness or from old age, but should find death in the performance of some deed of daring.—S. sees an indirect question introduced by 'hwár' and dependent upon 'wundur': *A secret is it when the hero is to die, etc.*—Why may the two clauses not be parallel, and the whole passage an Old English cry of '*How wonderful is death!*'?—S.'s is the best yet offered, if 'wundur' means 'mystery.'

[3] For 'strude' in H.-So., S. suggests 'stride.' This would require 'ravage' (v. 16) to be changed to 'tread.'

[4] 'He cared ... sight of' (17, 18), S. emends so as to read as follows: *He (Beowulf) had not before seen the favor of the avaricious possessor.*

[5] B. renders: *That which drew the king thither (i.e. the treasure) was granted us, but in such a way that it overcomes us.*

[6] ‘Folc-ágende’ (3114) B. takes as dat. sing. with ‘gódum,’ and refers it to Beowulf; that is, *Should bring fire-wood to the place where the good folk-ruler lay.*

[7] C. proposes to take ‘weaxan’ = L. ‘vescor,’ and translate *devour*. This gives a parallel to ‘fretan’ above. The parenthesis would be discarded and the passage read: *Now shall the fire consume, the wan-flame devour, the prince of warriors, etc.*

XLIII.

THE BURNING OF BEOWULF.

Beowulf's pyre.

The folk of the Geatmen got him
then ready

A pile on the earth strong for the
burning,

Behung with helmets, hero-
knights' targets,

And bright-shining burnies, as he
begged they should have them;

5

Then wailing war-heroes their
world-famous chieftain,

Their liegelord beloved, laid in
the middle.

Soldiers began

The funeral-flame.

then to make on the barrow

The largest of dead-fires: dark
o'er the vapor

The smoke-cloud ascended, the
sad-roaring fire,

10

Mingled with weeping (the wind-
roar subsided)

Till the building of bone it had
broken to pieces,

Hot in the heart. Heavy in spirit

They mood-sad lamented the
men-leader's ruin;

And mournful measures the
much-grieving widow

15

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*	*			
20				
*	*	*	*	*
*	*			

The men of the
Weders made
accordingly

The Weders carry out
their lord's last request.

A hill on the height, high and
extensive,

Of sea-going sailors to be seen
from a distance,

And the brave one's beacon built
where the fire was,

25

In ten-days' space, with a wall
surrounded it,

As wisest of world-folk could
most worthily plan it.

They placed in the barrow rings
and jewels,

All such
ornaments as erst
in the treasure

Rings and gems are laid
in the barrow.

War-mooded men had won in
possession:

30

The earnings of earlmen to earth
they entrusted,

The gold to the dust, where yet it
remaineth

As useless to mortals as in
foregoing eras.

'Round the dead-mound rode
then the doughty-in-battle,

Bairns of all twelve of the chiefs
of the people,

35

They mourn for their
lord, and sing his praises.

More would they
mourn, lament for their ruler,

Speak in measure, mention him
with pleasure,

Weighed his worth, and his
warlike achievements

Mightily commended, as 'tis meet
one praise his

Liegelord in words and love him
in spirit,

40

When forth from his body he
fares to destruction.

So lamented mourning the men
of the Geats,

Fond-loving vassals, the fall of
their lord,

Said he was An ideal king.

kindest of kings under heaven,

Gentlest of men, most winning of
manner,

45

Friendliest to folk-troops and
fondest of honor.

ADDENDA.

SEVERAL discrepancies and other oversights have been noticed in the H.-So. glossary. Of these a good part were avoided by Harrison and Sharp, the American editors of *Beowulf*, in their last edition, 1888. The rest will, I hope, be noticed in their fourth edition. As, however, this book may fall into the hands of some who have no copy of the American edition, it seems best to notice all the principal oversights of the German editors.

From há m (194).—Notes and glossary conflict; the latter not having been altered to suit the conclusions accepted in the former.

Þær gelyfan sceal dryhtnes dóme (440).—Under 'dóm' H. says 'the might of the Lord'; while under 'gelyfan' he says 'the judgment of the Lord.'

Eal bencþelu (486).—Under 'benc-þelu' H. says *nom. plu.*; while under 'eal' he says *nom. sing.*

Heatho-ræmas (519).—Under 'ætberan' H. translates 'to the Heathoremes'; while under 'Heatho-ræmas' he says 'Heathoræmas reaches Breca in the swimming-match with

Beowulf.' Harrison and Sharp (3d edition, 1888) avoid the discrepancy.

Fáh féond-scaða (554).—Under 'féond-scaða' H. says 'a gleaming sea-monster'; under 'fáh' he says 'hostile.'

Onfeng hraðe inwit-þancum (749).—Under 'onfón' H. says 'he *received* the maliciously-disposed one'; under 'inwit-þanc' he says 'he *grasped*,' etc.

Níð-wundor séon (1366).—Under 'níð-wundor' H. calls this word itself *nom. sing.*; under 'séon' he translates it as *accus. sing.*, understanding 'man' as subject of 'séon.' H. and S. (3d edition) make the correction.

Forgeaf hilde-bille (1521).—H., under the second word, calls it *instr. dat.*; while under 'forgifan' he makes it the *dat. of indir. obj.* H. and S. (3d edition) make the change.

Brád and brún-ecg (1547).—Under 'brád' H. says 'das breite Hüftmesser mit bronzener Klinge'; under 'brún-ecg' he says 'ihr breites Hüftmesser mit blitzender Klinge.'

Yðelíce (1557).—Under this word H. makes it modify ‘ástód.’ If this be right, the punctuation of the fifth edition is wrong. See H. and S., appendix.

Sélran gesóhte (1840).—Under ‘sél’ and ‘gesécan’ H. calls these two words accus. plu.; but this is clearly an error, as both are nom. plu., pred. nom. H. and S. correct under ‘sél.’

Wið sylfne (1978).—Under ‘wið’ and ‘gesittan’ H. says ‘wið = near, by’; under ‘self’ he says ‘opposite.’

þéow (2225) is omitted from the glossary.

For duguðum (2502).—Under ‘duguð’ H. translates this phrase, ‘in Tüchtigkeit’; under ‘for,’ by ‘vor der edlen Kriegerschaar.’

þær (2574).—Under ‘wealdan’ H. translates *þær* by ‘wo’; under ‘mótan,’ by ‘da.’ H. and S. suggest ‘if’ in both passages.

Wunde (2726).—Under ‘wund’ H. says ‘dative,’ and under ‘wæl-bléate’ he says ‘accus.’ It is without doubt accus., parallel with ‘benne.’

Strengum gebæded (3118).—Under ‘strengo’ H. says ‘Strengum’ = mit Macht; under ‘gebæded’ he translates ‘von den

Sehnen.' H. and S. correct this discrepancy by rejecting the second reading.

Bronda be láfe (3162).—A recent emendation. The fourth edition had 'bronda betost.' In the fifth edition the editor neglects to change the glossary to suit the new emendation. See 'bewyrcan.'

END