

# **BEOWULF: AN ANGLO-SAXON EPIC POEM**

*J. Lesslie Hall*

Edited & Published By



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**BEOWULF**  
**AN ANGLO-SAXON EPIC**  
**POEM**

*TRANSLATED*  
*FROM THE HEYNE-SOCIN TEXT*

BY

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**D.C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS**

**BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO**

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year  
1892, 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 Gummere<sup>1</sup> 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 woefully 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](#).

**Eofof.**—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](#).

**Healfdene.**—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 Geat-land, 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 liegelord, 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 liegelord 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 Higela'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.

THOROUGHLY.—Thoroughly.

TOLD.—Counted.

UNCANNY.—Ill-featured, grizzly.

UNNETHE.—Difficult.

WAR-SPEED.—Success in war.

WEB.—Tapestry (that which is ‘woven’).

WEEDDED.—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.

Lo! the Spear-Danes' glory through  
splendid achievements

The famous race of  
Spear-Danes.

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,

Whom God-Father sent to solace  
the people.

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

He had marked the misery malice had caused  
them,

15

<sup>1</sup>That reaved of their rulers they wretched had  
erstwhile<sup>2</sup>

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:

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.<sup>3</sup> 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  
there,

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

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

He leaves Daneland on  
the breast of a bark.

Who when first he 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,<sup>4</sup>

No one knows whither  
 the boat drifted.

Heroes under heaven, to what haven he hied.

[1] For the 'þæt' of verse 15, Sievers suggests 'þá' (= 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 Beowulf succeeds his  
father Scyld  
of the Scyldings,

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.

Healfdene's birth.

Four bairns of his 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-Scyfling 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  
Obeyed 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, and in it to share

He is eager to build a  
great hall in which he  
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

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

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

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-spirit endured  
for a season,

Bore it bitterly, he who bided in  
darkness,

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

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 earthmen's  
beginnings,

[The course of the story is  
interrupted by a short  
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 stranger<sup>2</sup>

50

Was Grendel entitled, the march-stepper famous  
Who<sup>3</sup> 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.

#### **GRENDDEL THE MURDERER.**

When the sun was sunken, he set  
out to visit

Grendel attacks the  
sleeping heroes

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,<sup>1</sup>

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:

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

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

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,

The monster returns the  
next night.

20

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 elsewhere 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

<sup>2</sup>So ruled he and strongly strove against justice

Lone against all men, till empty  
uptowered

King Hrothgar's agony  
and suspense last twelve  
years.

The choicest of houses. Long was  
the season:

Twelve-winters' time torture suffered  
The friend of the Scyldings, every affliction,

35

Endless agony; hence it after<sup>13</sup> 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,



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.

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.

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

(Since God did oppose him, not the throne could he touch,<sup>5</sup>

God is against the  
monster.

55

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

'Twas a fearful affliction to the friend of the  
Scyldings

Soul-crushing sorrow. Not seldom  
in private

The king and his council  
deliberate in vain.

Sat the king in his council; conference held they

What the braves should determine 'gainst terrors  
unlooked for.

60

At the shrines of their idols often  
they promised

They invoke the aid of  
their gods.

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,

The true God they do not  
know.

Judge of their actions, All-wielding  
Ruler,

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 fleeted; 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 floater fanned by the vessel sails like a bird  
the breeze,

Likest a bird, glided the waters,

30

Till twenty and four hours  
thereafter

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

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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.

"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,  
<sup>3</sup>And 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

He is struck by Beowulf's  
appearance.

Nothing have known. Never a  
greater one

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 fellow<sup>4</sup> 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.

The chief of the strangers rendered him answer, Beowulf courteously replies.

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

We are Geats.

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

And Higelac's hearth-friends. To heroes unnumbered

5

My father was known, a noble head-warrior My father Ecgtheow was well-known in his day.

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

Our intentions towards King Hrothgar are of the kindest.

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

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,

Is it true that a monster is  
slaying Danish heroes?

15

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

I am able to render counsel to  
Hrothgar,

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

If the anguish of sorrow should ever be lessened,<sup>1</sup>  
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.”

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

Bestriding his stallion, the strand-  
watchman 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.

He again compliments  
Beowulf.

To warrior so great 'twill be granted  
sure

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 glistened<sup>2</sup>

Bright on the visors vivid with gilding,

Blaze-hardened, brilliant; the boar acted warden.

The heroes hastened, hurried the  
liegemen,

The land is perhaps  
rolling.

Descended together, till they saw  
the great palace,

The well-fashioned wassail-hall wondrous and gleaming:

'Mid world-folk and kindreds that  
was widest reputed

Heorot flashes on their  
view.

Of halls under heaven which the hero abode in;

Its lustre enlightened lands without number.

Then the battle-brave hero showed them the  
glittering

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

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 ‘gúðmóðgum 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

They set their arms and  
armor against the wall.

In warlike equipments. '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

He expresses no little  
admiration for the  
strangers.

20

Men so many of mien more  
courageous.

I ween that from valor, nowise as outlaws,

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

Then the strength-famous earlman  
answer rendered,

Beowulf replies.

The proud-mooded Wederchief replied to his  
question,

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

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

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."

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,

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,

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  
they seem

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

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 answered, helm of the  
Scyldings:

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

“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,

Who valuable gift-gems of the  
Geatmen<sup>1</sup> carried

Beowulf is reported to  
have the strength of  
thirty men.

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.

15

Hasten to bid them hither to speed them,<sup>2</sup>  
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.

20

"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 excellentthane-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

His fight with the nickers.

The strength of my body. Themselves they beheld  
me

When I came from the contest, when covered with  
gore

Foes I escaped from, where five<sup>3</sup> 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

He intends to fight  
Grendel unaided.

I shall manage the 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

Since the monster uses  
no weapons,

From veriest 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

I, too, shall disdain to use  
any.

The foe I must grapple, fight for my  
life then,

Foeman with foeman; he fain must rely on

The doom of the Lord whom death  
layeth hold of.

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

70

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

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

Boldly to swallow<sup>4</sup> them, as of yore he did often

The best of the Hrethmen! Thou needest not  
trouble

A head-watch to give me;<sup>5</sup> he will have me dripping

75

And dreary with gore, if death  
overtake me,<sup>6</sup>

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

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.<sup>z</sup> If I fall in the  
battle,

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

80

Send to Higelac the armor that serveth

To shield my bosom, the best of equipments,

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

Weird is supreme

The work of 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 ‘Geátana 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 responds.

Hrothgar discoursed, helm of the Scyldings:

“To defend our folk and to furnish assistance,<sup>1</sup>

Thou soughtest us hither, good  
friend Beowulf.

Reminiscences of  
Beowulf's father,  
Ecgtheow.

The fiercest of feuds thy father  
engaged in,

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!

15

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.

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

It pains me in spirit to any to tell it,  
What grief in Heorot Grendel hath caused me,

20

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

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

25

O'er the ale-vessel promised

warriors in armor

They would willingly wait on the wassailing-  
benches

A grapple with Grendel, with grimmest 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 at the feast now, thy intents unto Sit down to the feast, and  
give us comfort.  
heroes,<sup>2</sup>

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

35

For the men of the Geats then  
together assembled,

A bench is made ready  
for Beowulf and his party.

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,

The gleeman sings

40

And gleaming-drink poured. The gleeman sang  
whilom

Hearty in Heorot; there was heroes' rejoicing,

The heroes all rejoice  
together.

A numerous war-band of Weders and Danemen.

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

wære-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 spoke up, Ecglaf his son,

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

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

Opened the jousting (the journey 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):

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

“Art thou that Beowulf with Breca  
did struggle,

On the wide sea-currents at swimming contended,

10

Where to humor your pride the  
ocean ye tried,

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

From vainest vaunting adventured  
your bodies

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,

Had borough and jewels. The pledge that he made  
thee

The son of Beanstan hath soothly      Breca outdid you entirely.  
accomplished.

Then I ween thou wilt find thee less fortunate  
issue,

Though ever triumphant in onset of      Much more will Grendel  
battle,      outdo you, if you vie with  
him in prowess.

A grim grappling, if Grendel thou darest

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

Beowulf retaliates.

Beowulf answered, offspring of Ecgtheow:

“My good friend Unferth, sure freely  
and wildly,

O friend Unferth, you are  
fuddled with beer, and  
cannot talk coherently.

Thou fuddled with beer of Breca  
hast spoken,

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

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) that we yet  
would adventure

We simply kept an  
engagement made in  
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,  
The weltering waters, weathers the bleakest,

After five days the  
currents separated us.

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,

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

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,

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.

### BEOWULF SILENCES UNFERTH.—GLEE IS HIGH.

“So ill-meaning enemies often did cause me

Sorrow the sorest. I served them, in  
quittance,

My dear sword always  
served me faithfully.

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

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,

Fortune helps the brave  
earl.

The blustering crags. Weird often  
saveth

15

The undoomed hero if doughty his valor!

But me did it fortune 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,

After that escape I drifted  
to Finland.

Weary from travel. 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

Though with cold-blooded cruelty  
thou killedst thy brothers,

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

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

but he will soon learn to  
dread the Geats.

From Spear-Danish people. But the  
prowess and valor

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  
sun in its ether-robes,

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

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,

Consort of Hrothgar, of courtesy  
mindful,

Queen Wealhtheow plays  
the hostess.

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

Treasure-cups tendered, till time  
was afforded

She gives presents to the  
heroes.

That the decorous-mooded,  
diademed folk-queen

Might bear to Beowulf the bumper  
o'errunning;

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

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  
Wealhtheow'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:

“I purposed in spirit when I  
mounted the ocean,

I determined to do or die.

When I boarded 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,

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 yore was heard in     Glee is high.  
the building

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,<sup>2</sup> 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.

Hrothgar retires, leaving  
Beowulf in charge of the  
hall.

The liegemen all rose then. One  
saluted the other,

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 ðær' for the first: *So there it befell me, etc.* Another suggestion is to change the second 'hwæðere' into 'swá ðær': *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.

Then Hrothgar departed, his earl-  
throng attending him,

Hrothgar retires.

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

God has provided a watch  
for the hall.

5

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

Beowulf is self-confident

His warlike strength and the  
Wielder's protection.

He prepares for rest.

10

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,

15

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.

We will fight with  
nature's weapons only.

20

No battle-skill<sup>1</sup> has he, that blows he should strike  
me,

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;

The Geatish warriors lie  
down.

And many a martial mere-thane  
attending

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

But God raised up a  
deliverer.

Too many by far. 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,

40

God rules the world.

By the might of himself; the truth is  
established

That God Almighty hath governed for ages

Kindreds and nations. A night very  
lurid

Grendel comes to Heorot.

The trav'ler-at-twilight came tramping and  
striding.

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

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.<sup>2</sup>

[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.

'Neath the cloudy cliffs came from  
the moor then

Grendel comes from the  
fens.

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:

5

He went under welkin where well he  
knew of

He goes towards the  
joyous building.

The wine-joyous building, brilliant with plating,

Gold-hall of earthmen. Not the  
earliest occasion

This was not his first visit  
there.

He the home and manor of  
Hrothgar had sought:

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

10

Hardier hero, hall-thanes, more sturdy!

Then came to the building the warrior marching,

Bereft of his joyance. The door  
quickly opened

His horrid fingers tear  
the door open.

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,

He strides furiously into  
the hall.

Strode he angrily; 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,

He exults over his  
supposed prey.

A throng of 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

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.

No thought had the monster of deferring the  
matter,

But on earliest occasion he quickly  
laid hold of

Grendel immediately  
seizes a sleeping warrior,  
and devours him.

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

Feet and hands, too, eaten entirely.

Nearer he strode then, the stout-hearted warrior



Snatched as he slumbered, seizing  
with hand-grip,

Beowulf and Grendel  
grapple.

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,

He is anxious to flee.

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

His calling no more was the same he had followed

Long in his lifetime. The liege-  
kinsman worthy

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

Of Higelac minded his speech of the

evening,

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 hall groans.

The palace re-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.<sup>2</sup> 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

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

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.

### GRENDDEL IS VANQUISHED.

For no cause whatever would the  
earlmen's defender

Beowulf has no idea of  
letting Grendel live.

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

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

To slit into slivers, and seeking his  
spirit:

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 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

Grendel is sorely  
wounded.

Was each one if living. A body-  
wound suffered

The direful demon, damage  
incurable

His body bursts.

25

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 monster flees away  
to hide in the moors.

The end of his earthly existence was  
nearing,

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  
suspended,

Beowulf suspends  
Grendel's hand and arm  
in Heorot.

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.

In the mist of the morning many a  
warrior

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

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.

Grendel's blood dyes the  
waters.

There in bloody billows bubbled the

currents,

The angry eddy was everywhere mingled

And seething with gore, welling with sword-blood;<sup>1</sup>

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 is the hero of the  
hour.

Beowulf's praises; many often  
asserted

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

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

He is regarded as a  
probable successor to  
Hrothgar.

'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

Of Hrothgar the gracious (a good  
king he).

But no word is uttered to  
derogate from the old  
king

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 athane of the folk-  
lord,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup>A man of celebrity, mindful of  
rhythms,

The gleeman sings the  
deeds of heroes.

Who ancient traditions treasured in memory,  
New word-groups found properly bound:

35

The bard after 'gan then Beowulf's  
venture

He sings in alliterative  
measures of Beowulf's  
prowess.

Wisely to tell of, and words that  
were clever

To utter skilfully, earnestly speaking,

Everything told he that he heard as  
to Sigmund's

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

Mighty achievements, many things  
hidden,

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.

Sigemund was widely  
famed.

He was farthest famed of fugitive pilgrims,  
Mid wide-scattered world-folk, for works of great  
prowess,

War-troopers' shelter: hence waxed  
he in honor.<sup>4</sup>

Afterward Heremod's hero-strength  
failed him,

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

65

His vigor and valor. 'Mid venomous haters  
To the hands of foemen he was foully 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,

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.—

The story is resumed.

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

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,<sup>1</sup> saw the steep-rising hall-  
roof

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

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

Hrothgar gives thanks for  
the overthrow of the  
monster.

5

Early be offered! Much evil I bided,  
Snaring from Grendel:<sup>2</sup> 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 offfrightened<sup>3</sup>

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

15

A doughty retainer hath a deed now accomplished  
Which erstwhile we all with our  
excellent wisdom  
Failed to perform. May affirm very  
truly

If his mother yet liveth,  
well may she thank God  
for this son.

What woman soever in all of the nations  
Gave birth to the child, if yet she surviveth,

20

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

Of earth-joys any I ever can give thee.

Full often for lesser service I've given

Hero less hardy hoard-treasure  
precious,

Thou hast won immortal  
distinction.

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

Thou hast gained for thyself now that thy glory  
shall flourish

Forever and ever. The All-Ruler quite thee

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

Beowulf replies: I was  
most happy to render  
thee this service.

Beowulf answered, Ecgtheow's  
offspring:

"That labor of glory most gladly achieved we,

The combat accomplished, unquailing we ventured

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;

He left his hand and arm  
behind.

No shadow of solace the woe-  
begone creature

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,

God will give him his  
deserts.

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

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 'gryn,' by a scribal slip.

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

## XVI.

### HROTHGAR LAVISHES GIFTS UPON HIS DELIVERER.

Then straight was ordered that  
Heorot inside<sup>1</sup>

Heorot is adorned with  
hands.

With hands be embellished: a host of them  
gathered,

Of men and women, who the wassailing-building  
The guest-hall begeared. Gold-flashing sparkled

5

Webs on the walls then, of wonders a many  
To each of the heroes that look on  
such objects.

The hall is defaced,  
however.

The beautiful building was broken  
to pieces

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<sup>2</sup>

[A vague passage of five  
verses.]

The place awaiting, as Wyrð hath appointed,

15

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

Where bound on its bed his body  
shall slumber

Hrothgar goes to the  
banquet.

When feasting is finished. Full was  
the time then

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.

Hrothgar lavishes gifts  
upon Beowulf.

Then the offspring of Healfdene  
offered to 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.

Four handsomer gifts  
were never presented.

Ne'er heard I that many men on the  
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 of earlmen to each    Each of Beowulf's  
of the heroes                                    companions receives a  
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  
Grendel is to be paid for  
in gold.

With gold should be paid for, whom  
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:

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

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

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

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

30

She had hitherto had: all the  
henchmen of Finn

Finn's force is almost  
exterminated.

War had oftaken, save a handful remaining,

That he nowise was able to offer  
resistance<sup>a</sup>

Hengest succeeds Hnæf  
as Danish general.

To the onset of Hengest in the  
parley of battle,

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 Compact between the  
Frisians and the Danes.  
ready,

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

On the bench of the beer-hall. On Equality of gifts agreed  
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:

No one shall refer to old  
grudges.

Then if one of the 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.

Danish warriors are  
burned on a funeral-pyre.

The best of the Scylding braves was  
then fully

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  
the fire,

Queen Hildeburg has her  
son burnt along with  
Hnæf.

That his body be burned and borne to the pyre.

The woe-stricken woman wept on his shoulder,<sup>2</sup>

65

In measures lamented; upmounted the hero.<sup>3</sup>

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 departed to go to their dwellings,

The survivors go to  
Friesland, the home of  
Finn.

Reaved of their friends, Friesland to visit,

Their homes and high-city. Hengest  
continued

Hengest remains there all  
winter, unable to get  
away.

Biding with Finn the blood-tainted  
winter,

5

Wholly unsundered; 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 alway regardeth,  
World-cheering weathers. Then winter was gone,  
Earth's bosom was lovely; the exile  
would get him,

He devises schemes of  
vengeance.

The guest from the 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,

Guthlaf and Oslaf  
revenge Hnæf's  
slaughter.

When the 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 covered<sup>2</sup>

With corpses of foemen, and Finn      Finn is slain.  
too was slaughtered,

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

30      The jewels of Finn, and  
The troops of the Scyldings bore to      his queen are carried  
their vessels      away by the Danes.

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

Skinkers carry round the  
beaker.

Wine from wonder-vats. Wealhtheo  
advanced then

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

40

Uncle and nephew; their peace was  
yet mutual,

Queen Wealhtheow  
greet's Hrothgar, as he  
sits beside Hrothulf, his  
nephew.

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 Geatmen with  
gracious responses!

Be generous to the Geats.

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

50

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.

55

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

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

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

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,

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

Beowulf is sitting by the  
two royal sons.

’Twixt 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.

More gifts are offered  
Beowulf.

A beaker was borne him, and  
bidding to quaff it

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,<sup>1</sup>

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;

The 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:

“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.

30

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.

35

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,<sup>3</sup>

40

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

There was choicest of banquets, wine drank the  
heroes:

Weird they knew not, destiny cruel, They little know of the  
sorrow in store for them.

As to many an earlman early it  
happened,

When evening had come and Hrothgar had parted

45

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.

A doomed thane is there  
with them.

Doomed unto death, down to his  
slumber

50

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,

They were always ready  
for battle.

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

55

To constantly keep them equipped for the battle,<sup>4</sup>

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) wīg gearwe' should be written 'ánwīg-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 holding<sup>4</sup> 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  
Cain had become a

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

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,

15

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;

20

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

Grendel's mother comes  
to avenge her son.

Eager and gloomy was anxious to go  
on

Her mournful mission, mindful of vengeance  
For the death of her son. She came then to Heorot

30

Where the Armor-Dane earlmen all through the  
building

Were lying in slumber. Soon there became then  
Return<sup>2</sup> 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,

35

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,<sup>3</sup>

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;

She seizes a favorite  
liegemen of Hrothgar's.

45

Soon she had grappled one of the athelings  
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,

But another apartment was  
erstwhile devoted

Beowulf was asleep in  
another part of the  
palace.



To the glory-decked Geatman when gold was distributed.

There was hubbub in Heorot. The hand that was famous

She grasped in its gore;<sup>4</sup> 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-agèd 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,

He comes at Hrothgar's summons.

Went then that earlman, champion noble,

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;<sup>5</sup> 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 [20 15](#) 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 laments the  
death of Æschere, his  
shoulder-companion.

Hrothgar rejoined, 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,

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

He was my ideal hero.

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.<sup>1</sup> The  
quarrel she wreaked then,

This horrible creature  
came to avenge Grendel's  
death.

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,<sup>2</sup>

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

Which<sup>3</sup> availed you in every wish that you  
cherished.

Land-people heard I, liegemen, this  
saying,

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

Dwellers in halls, they had seen very often  
A pair of such mighty march-striding creatures,  
Far-dwelling spirits, holding the moorlands:  
One of them wore, as well they might notice,

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,

Whe'r ill-going spirits any were  
borne him

Ever before. They guard the wolf-  
coverts,

The inhabit the most  
desolate and horrible  
places.

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,<sup>4</sup>

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,

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

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

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,

55

To thee only can I look  
for assistance.

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 wlane' (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 wise one! for each it  
is better, Beowulf exhorts the old  
king to arouse himself for  
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.

15

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

They start on the track of  
the female monster.

Stately proceeded: stepped then an  
earl-troop

20

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.

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,

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,

Friends of the Scyldings, to many a  
 liegeman

Sad to be suffered, a sorrow unlittle

The sight of Æschere's  
 head causes them great  
 sorrow.

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, hateful, they heard  
the great clamor,

One of them is killed by  
Beowulf.

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

Sunder from earth-joys, with arrow from  
bowstring,

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

Pierced to his vitals; he proved in  
the currents

The dead beast is a poor  
swimmer

Less doughty at swimming whom death had  
offcarried.

Soon in the waters the wonderful swimmer

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

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

The liegemen then looked on the loath-fashioned  
stranger.

Beowulf donned then his battle-  
equipments,

Beowulf prepares for a  
struggle with the  
monster.

Cared little for life; inlaid and most ample,

The hand-woven corslet which could cover his  
body,

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

He has Unferth's sword  
in his hand.

70

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,

Repute for his strength. Not so with the other  
 When he clad in his corslet had equipped him for  
 battle.

## XXIII.

### BEOWULF'S FIGHT WITH GRENDEL'S MOTHER.

Beowulf makes a parting  
speech to Hrothgar.

Beowulf spake, Ecgtheow's son:

“Recall now, oh, famous kinsman of Healfdene,

Prince very prudent, now to part I am ready,

Gold-friend of earlmen, what erst  
we agreed on,

If I fail, act as a kind  
liegelord to my thanes,

5

Should I lay down my life in lending thee  
assistance,

When my earth-joys were over, thou wouldst  
evermore serve me

In stead of a father; my faithful thanemen,

My trusty retainers, protect thou and care for,

Fall I in battle: and, Hrothgar  
belovèd,

and send Higelac the  
jewels thou hast given me

10

Send unto Higelac the high-valued jewels

Thou to me hast allotted. The lord of the Geatmen

May perceive from the gold, the Hrethling may see  
it

When he looks on the jewels, that a  
gem-giver found I

I should like my king to  
know how generous a  
lord I found thee to be.

Good over-measure, enjoyed him while able.

15

And the ancient heirloom Unferth permit thou,  
The famed one to have, the heavy-sword splendid,  
The hard-edged 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



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  
 exploring.

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

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,

The ring-prince homeward, that he  
 after was powerless

She grabs him, and bears  
 him to her den.

35

(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

40

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,

Beowulf attacks the  
mother of Grendel.

45

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,

50

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,

55

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 shoulder<sup>2</sup>

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

Beowulf falls.

She gave him requital<sup>3</sup> early thereafter,

And stretched out to grab him; the strongest of  
warriors

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

The monster sits on him  
with drawn sword.

70

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 woven bode on his<sup>His armor saves his life.</sup>  
shoulder;

It guarded his life, the entrance defended

'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,

God arranged for his  
escape.

And had God most holy not  
awarded the victory,

All-knowing Lord; easily did heaven's  
Ruler most righteous arrange it with justice;<sup>4</sup>  
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.

Beowulf grasps a giant-  
sword,

Then he saw mid 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 bone-joints, the  
bill fully pierced her

and fells the female  
monster.

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

The hand-sword was bloody, the hero exulted.

The brand was brilliant, brightly it glimmered,

15

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

20

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,

The hoary of head, that they hoped  
not to see again

Beowulf is given up for  
dead.

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.<sup>1</sup>

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

To see any more. The sword-blade      The giant-sword melts.  
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:<sup>2</sup>

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 daring<sup>3</sup>

Bare then the head from the sea-cliff, burdening

Each of the earlmen, excellent-  
valiant.

Four of them had to carry with labor It takes four men to carry  
Grendel's head on a  
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] ‘Pæs 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.) 178<sub>7</sub>; 204<sub>34</sub>; 208<sub>28</sub>; 210<sub>15</sub>; 280<sub>20</sub>. In the two Beowulf passages, the þæt-clause is anticipated by ‘pæs,’ 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

Gave me willingly to see on the wall

God was fighting with  
me.

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

15

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

Then the battle-sword burned, the brand that was  
lifted,<sup>1</sup>

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,

20

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

Thou'lt be able in Heorot careless to Heorot is freed from  
monsters.  
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 gray-haired chieftain, the gold-  
fashioned sword-hilt,

The famous sword is  
presented to Hrothgar.

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,



Who the scot divided in Scylding  
dominion.

Hrothgar looks closely at  
the old sword.

Hrothgar discoursed, the 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,

They had proved themselves daring: that people  
was loth to

The Lord everlasting, through lash  
of the billows

It had belonged to a race  
hateful to God.

The Father gave them final requital.

So in letters of rune on the clasp of the handle  
Gleaming and golden, 'twas graven exactly,

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)

Hrothgar praises  
Beowulf.

Son of old Healfdene: “He may say  
unrefuted

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

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

became not

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,

75

Hrothgar moralizes.

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.

*A wounded spirit.*

“Then bruised in 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,<sup>1</sup>

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,

Hrothgar gives an  
account of his reign.

25

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."



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

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,

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;<sup>2</sup>

The warriors hastened, the heads of the peoples  
Were ready to go again to their  
peoples,

The Geats prepare to  
leave Dane-land.

60

The high-mooded farer would faraway thenceward  
Look for his vessel. The valiant one bade then,<sup>3</sup>

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 Grdtvg. 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 spake, Ecgtheow's  
offspring:

Beowulf's farewell.

"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

I shall be ever ready to  
aid thee.

10

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!

O Beowulf, thou art wise  
beyond thy years.

Ne’er heard I an 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

30

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,

35

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,

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,<sup>1</sup>  
After ancient etiquette everywise blameless."

Then the warden of earlmen gave  
him still farther,

Parting gifts

Kinsman of Healfdene, 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 long-famous hero longeth in  
secret

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

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

Was frequently referred to: a folk-  
king indeed that

Giving liberally is the true  
proof of kingship.

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,

The coast-guard again.

In link-woven 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 visitors: vesselward  
traveled

Welcome to Weders. The wide-bosomed craft then

Lay on the sand, laden with armor,

10

With horses and jewels, the ring-stemmèd sailer:

The mast uptowered o'er the treasure of Hrothgar.

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

Beowulf gives the guard a  
handsome sword.

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

As the heirloom's owner. <sup>a</sup>Set 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.

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,<sup>3</sup>

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

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,<sup>4</sup>

Himself with his comrades close to the sea-coast.

The building was splendid, the king heroic,

Great in his hall, Hygd very young

was,

Hygd, the noble queen of  
Higelac, lavish of gifts.

Fine-mooded, clever, though few

were the winters

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.

Offa's consort, Thrytho, is  
contrasted with Hygd.

Thrytho nursed anger, excellent<sup>5</sup>  
folk-queen,

Hot-burning hatred: no hero whatever

'Mong household companions, her husband  
excepted

45

Dared to adventure to look at the  
woman

She is a terror to all save  
her husband.

With eyes in the daytime;<sup>6</sup> 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,

Seeking the sea-shore, the sea-marches treading,

Beowulf and his party  
seek Higelac.

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.

15

Beowulf sits by his  
liegeland.

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,

Queen Hygd receives the  
heroes.

In words that were formal. The  
daughter of Hæreth

Coursed through the building, carrying mead-  
cups:<sup>1</sup>

20

She loved the retainers, tendered the beakers

To the high-minded Geatmen.

Higelac 'gan then

Higelac is greatly  
interested in Beowulf's  
adventures.

Pleasantly plying his companion  
with questions

In the high-towering palace. A curious interest

Tormented his spirit, what meaning to see in

The Sea-Geats' adventures:

"Beowulf worthy,

Give an account of thy  
adventures, Beowulf  
dear.

How throve your journeying, when  
thou thoughtest suddenly

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

Any at all? In agony-billows

I mused upon torture, distrusted  
the journey

My suspense has been  
great.

Of the belovèd liegeman; I long time did pray thee

By no means to seek out the murderous spirit,

To suffer the South-Danes themselves to decide  
on<sup>2</sup>

Grappling with Grendel. To God I am thankful

To be suffered to see thee safe from  
thy journey."

Beowulf narrates his  
adventures.

Beowulf answered, 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

45

Needeth not boast of that cry-in-  
the-morning,

Grendel's kindred have  
no cause to boast.

Who longest liveth of the loth-going kindred,<sup>3</sup>  
Encompassed by moorland. I came in my journey  
To the royal ring-hall, Hrothgar to  
greet there:

Hrothgar received me  
very cordially.

Soon did the famous scion of  
Healfdene,

50

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

The queen also showed  
up no little honor.

'Mid hall-building 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.

Hrothgar's lovely  
daughter.

Oft the daughter of 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,<sup>4</sup>

65

And counts it a vantage, for a part of the quarrels,  
A portion of hatred, to pay with the woman.

<sup>5</sup>Somewhere 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:

15

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,

20

(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!



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

'Scapeth alive, the land knoweth thoroughly.<sup>1</sup>  
 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,

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 happened a hopeless      Hondscio fell first  
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-fetters 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;

I reflected honor upon  
my people.

'Twas there, my prince, that I  
proudly distinguished

Thy land with my labors. He left and retreated,  
He lived his life a little while longer:

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,

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;

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

Grendel's mother.

85

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 mainstrenght murdered a hero.

There the spirit of Æschere, agèd  
adviser,

Æschere falls a prey to  
her vengeance.

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 suffered not his body  
to be burned, but ate it.

She the corpse had offcarried in the  
clutch of the foeman<sup>2</sup>

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 me<sup>3</sup>

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

105

and hewed her head off.

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,  
Healfdene his bairn; I’ll bring them  
to thee, then,

All my gifts I lay at thy  
feet.

5

Atheling of earlmen, offer them gladly.

And still unto thee is all my affection:<sup>1</sup>

But few of my folk-kin find I surviving

But thee, dear Higelac!” Bade he in then to carry<sup>2</sup>

The boar-image, banner, battle-high helmet,

10

Iron-gray armor, the excellent  
weapon,

This armor I have  
belonged of yore to  
Heregar.

In song-measures said: “This suit-  
for-the-battle

Hrothgar presented me, bade me expressly,

Wise-mooded atheling, thereafter to tell thee<sup>3</sup>



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

Higelac loves his nephew  
Beowulf.

Of trusty companion. Most precious  
to Higelac,

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  
Wealhtheow had given  
him.

Wonder-gem rare that Wealhtheow 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,

Beowulf is famous.

War-famous man, 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,

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,

He is requited for the  
 slights suffered in earlier  
 days.

An indolent atheling: to the honor-  
 blest man there

Came requital for the cuts he had suffered.

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

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 Heardred's death,  
Beowulf becomes king.

After Higelac's death, and when  
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

60

Of Hereric in battle. To Beowulf's keeping

Turned there in time extensive  
dominions:

He rules the Geats fifty  
years.

He fittingly ruled them a fifty of  
winters

(He a man-ruler wise was, manor-ward old) till

A certain one 'gan, on gloom-darkening nights, a

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

*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*

[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.’

## 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,

The hoard.

10

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.<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup>Ponderous deal of the treasure of nobles,

Of gold that was beaten, briefly he  
 spake then:<sup>3</sup>

The ring-giver bewails  
 the loss of retainers.

“Hold thou, O Earth, now heroes no  
 more may,

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

The fire-dragon

Dashed on his spirit. Then the ancient dusk-  
scatter

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 for<sup>4</sup>

55

The hoard in the earth, where old he is guarding

The heathenish treasure; he’ll be nowise the better.

So three-hundred winters the  
waster of peoples

The dragon meets his  
match.

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 hoard<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> Yet he joyed in the battle,  
Rejoiced in the conflict: oft he turned to the  
barrow,

Sought for the gem-cup;<sup>7</sup> this he soon perceived  
then

80

That some man or other had

The dragon perceives that  
some one has disturbed  
his treasure.

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

The dragon is infuriated.

Fire-impelled, 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 dragon spits fire.*

The stranger 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.

Then straight was the horror to  
Beowulf published,

Beowulf hears of the  
havoc wrought by the  
dragon.

Early forsooth, that his own native homestead,<sup>1</sup>

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:

The wise one weened then that  
wielding his kingdom

He fears that Heaven is  
punishing him for some  
crime.

'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

He orders an iron shield  
to be made from him,  
wood is useless.

Wholly of iron: fully he knew then

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.

Then the ring-prince disdained to  
seek with a war-band,

He determines to fight  
alone.

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.<sup>2</sup>

Higelac's death recalled.

'Twas of hand-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

50

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.

55

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.

Beowulf's tact and  
delicacy recalled.

Yet the sad ones succeeded not in  
persuading the atheling

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 fatal<sup>3</sup>

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. Oh there'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 companions the prince of the Geatmen      With eleven comrades, he seeks the dragon.

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.

That in the throng was thirteenth of  
 heroes,

A guide leads the way,  
 but

That caused the beginning of conflict so bitter,  
Captive and wretched, must sad-mooded  
thenceward

Point out the place: he passed then very reluctantly.  
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:

35

Beowulf's retrospect.

"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,

Hrethel took me when I  
was seven.

40

Gave me treasure and feasting, our kinship  
remembered;

Not ever was I *any* less dear to him

Knight in the boroughs, than the  
bairns of his household,

He treated me as a son.

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

His sheltering chieftain shot with an  
arrow,

One of the brothers  
accidentally kills another.

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,



Sad to his spirit; the folk-prince however  
 Had to part from existence with vengeance  
 untaken.

So to hoar-headed hero 'tis heavily [A parallel case is  
supposed.]  
 crushing<sup>1</sup>

To live to see his son as he rideth  
 Young on the gallows: then measures he chanteth,

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

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

Mindful of Herebald heart-sorrow  
carried,

Hrethel grieves for  
Herebald.

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.

Strife between Swedes  
and Geats.

Then was crime and hostility 'twixt  
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,

Hæthcyn's fall at  
Ravenswood.

With price that was hard: the  
struggle became then

Fatal to Hæthcyn, lord of the Geatmen.

Then I heard that at morning one brother the  
other

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.

I requited him for the  
 jewels he gave me.

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

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:

"I braved in my youth-days battles  
unnumbered;

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

His last salutations.

Belovèd co-liegemmen—his last salutation:

"No brand would I bear, no blade for the dragon,

Wist I a way my word-boast to 'complish<sup>1</sup>

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 barrow<sup>2</sup>

I'll not flee from a foot-length, the foeman  
uncanny.

At the wall 'twill befall us as Fate  
decreeeth,

Let Fate decide between  
us.

65

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,

Wait ye here till the battle  
is over.

Earls in armor, which of *us* two may  
better

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,

Stone-arches standing, stout-  
hearted champion,

The place of strife is  
described.

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,

The hoard-ward distinguished the  
speech of a man;

Beowulf calls out under  
the stone arches.

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:

The terrible encounter.

95

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.

Beowulf brandishes his  
sword,

The excellent battle-king first  
brandished his weapon,

100

The ancient heirloom, of edges unblunted,<sup>3</sup>  
To the death-planners twain was terror from  
other.

The lord of the troopers intrepidly  
stood then

and stands against his  
shield.

'Gainst his high-rising shield, when the dragon  
coiled him

Quickly together: in corslet he  
bided.

The dragon coils himself.

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,

When the sword-blow had fallen,      The dragon rages  
was fierce in his spirit,

Flinging his fires, flamings of battle

Gleamed then afar: the gold-friend  
of Weders

Beowulf's sword fails  
him.

Boasted no conquests, his 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

The combat is renewed.

Met with each other. Anew and afresh

The hoard-ward took heart (gasps heaved then his  
bosom):

Sorrow he suffered encircled with  
fire

The great hero is reduced  
to extremities.

130

Who the people erst governed. His companions by  
no means

Were banded about him, bairns of  
the princes,

His comrades flee!

With valorous spirit, but they sped to the forest,

Seeking for safety. The soul-deeps  
of one were

Blood is thicker than  
water.

Ruffled by care: 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.

The son of Weohstan was Wiglaf  
entitled,

Wiglaf remains true—the  
ideal Teutonic liegeman.

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,

The Wægmunding warriors' wealth-  
blessèd homestead,

Wiglaf recalls Beowulf's  
generosity.

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:

Wiglaf appeals to the  
pride of the cowards.

30

"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:

How we have forfeited  
our liegelord's  
confidence!

35

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.

Our lord is in sore need  
of us.

The day is now come when the ruler  
of earthmen

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.

I would rather die than  
go home with out my  
suzerain.

God wot in me, 'tis mickle the liefer

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

Surely he does not  
deserve to die alone.

The prince of the Weders. Well do I  
know 't isn't

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,

Wiglaf reminds Beowulf  
of his youthful boasts.

Briefly discoursing: "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;

The monster advances on  
them.

I'll give thee assistance." The dragon  
came raging,

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-aged  
stripling

Quickly advanced 'neath his kinsman's war-target,  
Since his own had been ground in the grip of the  
fire.

Then the warrior-king was careful  
of glory,

Beowulf strikes at the  
dragon.

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

His sword fails him.

Brand of Beowulf in battle deceived him.

'Twas denied him that edges of irons were able  
To help in the battle; the hand was too mighty

80

Which 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 ‘Ponne’ he reads ‘Pone,’ rel. pr.

## XXXVII.

### THE FATAL STRUGGLE.—BEOWULF'S LAST MOMENTS.

Then I heard that at need of the      Wiglaf defends Beowulf.  
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 fire<sup>2</sup>

Beowulf draws his knife,

Later to lessen. The liegelord himself then

10

Retained his consciousness, brandished his war-  
knife,

Battle-sharp, bitter, that he bare on  
his armor:

and cuts the dragon.

The Weder-lord cut the worm in the middle.

They had felled the enemy (life drove out then<sup>3</sup>

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,

He sits down exhausted.

That along by the 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

Far-famous chieftain, gory from  
sword-edge,

Wiglaf bathes his lord's  
head.

Refreshing the face of his friend-lord and ruler,

30

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

35

His measure of days, death very  
near):

Beowulf regrets that he  
has no son.

“My son I would give now my  
battle-equipments,



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. Joy over all this

I can rejoice in a well-  
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 fyr*’ (2702), S. emends to ‘*þá þæt fyr*’ = *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 Wihstan's son  
very quickly,

Wiglaf fulfils his lord's  
behest.

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

The dragon's den.

Victorious saw, 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 bereaved,  
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 vanity.

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.

Wiglaf bears the hoard  
away.

Then I heard that the hero the  
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; 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,

30

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

35

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.

Beowulf spake (the gold-gems he noticed),

Beowulf is rejoiced to see the jewels.

The old one in sorrow: “For the jewels I look on

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

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

He desires to be held in memory by his people.

The wants of the war-thanes; I can wait here no longer.

The battle-famed bid ye to build them a grave-hill,

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 bold-mooded troop-lord took      The hero's last gift  
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:

60

and last words.

"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

65

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.

Wiglaf is sorely grieved to  
see his lord look so un-  
warlike.

It had wofully chanced then the  
youthful retainer

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 dragon has  
plundered his last hoard.

The round-twisted monster was  
permitted no longer

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

15

But few in the land of liegemen of  
valor,

Few warriors dared to  
face the monster.

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

20

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 cowardly thanes  
come out of the thicket.

The tardy-at-battle 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 power<sup>1</sup>

Would govern the actions of each one of heroes,

As yet He is doing. From the young      Wiglaf is ready to  
one forthwith then      excoriate them.

Could grim-worded greeting be got for him quickly

40

Whose courage had failed him. Wiglaf discoursed  
then,

Weohstan his son, sad-mooded  
hero,

He begins to taunt them.

Looked on the 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      Surely our lord wasted  
undoubtedly      his armor on poltroons.

When battle o’ertook him.<sup>2</sup> The troop-king no need  
had

50

To glory in comrades; yet God  
permitted him,

He, however, got along  
without you

Victory-Wielder, with weapon  
unaided

Himself to avenge, when vigor was needed.

I life-protection but little was able

To give him in battle, and I 'gan,  
notwithstanding,

With some aid, I could  
have saved our liegelord

55

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.

Gift-giving is over with  
your people: the ring-lord  
is dead.

60

Now must ornament-taking and  
weapon-bestowing,

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,

What is life without  
honor?

The dastardly deed. Death is more  
pleasant

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.

Then he charged that the battle be  
announced at the hedge

Wiglaf sends the news of  
Beowulf's death to  
liegemen near by.

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 beloved. 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-giving friend-lord of the folk of the Weders,

The messenger speaks.

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

Wiglaf sits by our dead  
lord.

15

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,<sup>1</sup>

Our lord's death will lead  
to attacks from our old  
foes.

For friend and for foeman. The folk  
now expecteth

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 overmight  
'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

Sundered Hæthcyn the Hrethling  
from life-joys,

Hæthcyn's fall referred  
to.

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 blood-stained trace of Swedes  
and Geatmen,

The messenger  
continues, and refers to  
the feuds of Swedes and  
Geats.

The death-rush of warmen, widely  
was noticed,

How the folks with each other feud did awaken.

The worthy one went then 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 banner<sup>2</sup> to  
Higelac.

They fared then forth o'er the field-of-protection,

15

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 then wildly with weapon  
assaulted him,

Wulf wounds  
Ongentheow.

20

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

Ongentheow gives a stout  
blow in return.

The wasting wound-stroke with worse exchange,

25

When the king of thethane-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.

Then Higelac's vassal, valiant and  
dauntless,

Eofor smites Ongentheow  
fiercely.

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,

Shepherd of people, was pierced to    Ongentheow is slain.  
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;

Eofor takes the old king's  
war-gear to Higelac.

The old one's equipments he carried  
to Higelac.

He the jewels received, and rewards 'mid the  
troopers

45

Graciously promised, and so did accomplish:

The king of the Weders requited the war-rush,

Hrethel's descendant, when home he repaired  
him,

To Eofor and Wulf with wide-  
lavished treasures,

Higelac rewards the  
brothers.

To each of them granted a hundred of thousands

50

In land and rings wrought out of  
wire:

His gifts were beyond  
cavil.

None upon mid-earth needed to  
twit him<sup>3</sup>

With the gifts he gave them, when glory they  
conquered;

And to Eofor then gave he his one  
only daughter,

To Eofor he also gives his  
only daughter in  
marriage.

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,<sup>4</sup> 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, grewsomely 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

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

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

Loathsome to hear; he lied as to few  
 of

Weirds and of words. All the war-

The warriors go sadly to  
 look at Beowulf's lifeless  
 body.

troop arose then,  
'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,

They also see the dragon.

95

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<sup>5</sup>

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,

With iron-rust eaten, as in earth's mighty bosom  
 A thousand of winters there they  
 had rested:

The hoard was under a  
 magic spell.

That mighty bequest then with  
 magic was guarded,

Gold of the ancients, that earlman not any  
 The ring-hall could touch, save Ruling-God only,

Sooth-king of Vict'ries gave whom  
 He wished to

God alone could give  
 access to it.

<sup>6</sup>(He is earth-folk's protector) to  
 open the treasure,

E'en to such among mortals as seemed to Him  
 proper.

[1] For ‘góda,’ 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 hidden<sup>1</sup>

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,<sup>2</sup>

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,

15

Confined in foul-places, fastened in hell-bonds,  
Punished with plagues, who this place should e'er  
ravage.<sup>3</sup>

He cared not for gold: rather the Wielder's  
Favor preferred he first to get sight  
of.<sup>4</sup>

Wiglaf addresses his  
comrades.

Wiglaf discoursed then, Wihstan his  
son:

20

“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

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 that<sup>5</sup>  
 The prince of the people pricked to come thither.

*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 earth-wall. Hastily      He tells them of  
 seized I                                      Beowulf's last moments.

And held in my hands a huge-weighting burden

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,



Bade that remembering the deeds of Beowulf's dying request.  
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."

Then the son of Wihstan bade  
orders be given,

Wiglaf charges them to  
build a funeral-pyre.

Mood-valiant man, to many of heroes,  
Holders of homesteads, that they hither from far,  
6Leaders of liegemen, should look for the good one

55

With wood for his pyre: "The flame shall now  
swallow

(The wan fire shall wax<sup>z</sup>) 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

He takes seven thanes,  
and enters the den.

Seven together; 'neath the enemy's  
roof he

Went with the seven; one of the heroes

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

That they hastily hence hauled out  
the treasure,

They push the dragon  
over the wall.

The dear-valued 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.

The hoard is laid on a  
wain.

There wounden gold on a wain was  
uploaded,

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.

The folk of the Geatmen got him Beowulf's pyre.  
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.

The funeral-flame.

Soldiers began 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

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The Weders carry out  
their lord's last request.

The men of the Weders made  
accordingly

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,

They mourn for their  
lord, and sing his praises.

35

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,

An ideal king.

Said he was 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 hám** (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 ‘bewyrcañ.’

**END**