

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"?

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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[1] 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.

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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 [x] 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 liegelord.

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

When the hero arrives in his own land, Higelac treats him as a distinguished guest. He is the hero of the hour.

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

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

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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.

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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.

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[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.]

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~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.

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~Elan~.--Sister of Hrothgar, and probably wife of Ongentheow, king of the Swedes.--2_10.

~Eagle Cape~.--A promontory in Geat-land, under which took place Beowulf's last encounter.--41_87.

~Eadgils~.--Son of Ohthere and brother of Eanmund.--34_2.

~Eanmund~.--Son of Ohthere and brother of Eadgils. The reference to these brothers is vague, and variously understood. Heyne supposes as follows: Raising a revolt against their father, they are obliged to leave Sweden. They go to the land of the Geats; with what intention, is not known, but probably to conquer and plunder. The Geatish king, Heardred, is slain by one of the brothers, probably Eanmund.--36_10; 31_54 to 31_60; 33_66 to 34_6.

~Eofor~.--A Geatish hero who slays Ongentheow in war, and is rewarded by Hygelac with the hand of his only daughter.--41_18; 41_48.

~Eormenric~.--A Gothic king, from whom Hama took away the famous Brosinga 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.

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~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.
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~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.
~Hyselac~, ~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 Scylding 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.'
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~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.
~Scyldings~.--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 Scyldings.--35_13.
~Thrytho~.--Wife of Offa, king of the Angles. Known for her fierce and unwomanly disposition. She is introduced as a contrast to the gentle Hygd, queen of Higelac.--28_42; 28_56.
~Unferth~.--Son of Ecglaf, and seemingly a confidential courtier of

Hrothgar. Taunts Beowulf for having taken part in the swimming-match.
 Lends Beowulf his sword when he goes to look for Grendel's mother. In the MS. sometimes written Hunferth. 9_1; 18_41.
 ~Wæls~.--Father of Sigemund.--14_60.
 ~Wægmunding~.--A name occasionally applied to Wiglaf and Beowulf, and perhaps derived from a common ancestor, Wægmund.--36_6; 38_61.
 ~Weders~.--Another name for Geats or Wedergeats.
 ~Wayland~.--A fabulous smith mentioned in this poem and in other old Teutonic literature.--7_83.
 ~Wendels~.--The people of Wulfgar, Hrothgar's messenger and retainer. (Perhaps = Vandals.)--6_30.
 ~Wealhtheow~.--Wife of Hrothgar. Her queenly courtesy is well shown in the poem.--10_55.
 ~Weohstan~, or ~Wihstan~.--A Wægmunding, and father of Wiglaf.--36_1.
 ~Whale's Ness~.--A prominent promontory, on which Beowulf's mound was built.--38_52; 42_76.
 ~Wiglaf~.--Son of Wihstan, and related to Beowulf. He remains faithful to Beowulf in the fatal struggle with the fire-drake. Would rather die than leave his lord in his dire emergency.--36_1; 36_3; 36_28.
 ~Wonred~.--Father of Wulf and Eofor.--41_20; 41_26.
 ~Wulf~.--Son of Wonred. Engaged in the battle between Higelac's and Ongentheow's forces, and had a hand-to-hand fight with Ongentheow himself. Ongentheow disables him, and is thereupon slain by Eofor.--41_19; 41_29.
 ~Wulfgar~.--Lord of the Wendels, and retainer of Hrothgar.--6_18; 6_30.
 ~Wylfings~.--A people to whom belonged Heatholaf, who was slain by Ecgtheow.--8_6; 8_16.
 ~Yrmenlaf~.--Younger brother of Æschere, the hero whose death grieved Hrothgar so deeply.--21_4.

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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').
 WEEDED.--Clad (cf. widow's weeds).
 WEEN.--Suppose, imagine.
 WEIRD.--Fate, Providence.
 WHILOM.--At times, formerly, often.
 WIELDER.--Ruler. Often used of God; also in compounds, as 'Wielder of
 Glory,' 'Wielder of Worship.'
 WIGHT.--Creature.
 WOLD.--Plane, extended surface.
 WOT.--Knows.
 YOUNKER.--Youth.

[1]

BEOWULF.

I.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SCYLD.

{The famous race of Spear-Danes.}

Lo! the Spear-Danes' glory through splendid achievements

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

How princes displayed then their prowess-in-battle.

{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.}

Oft Scyld the Scefing from scathers in numbers

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

A son and heir, young in his dwelling,

Whom God-Father sent to solace the people.

He had marked the misery malice had caused them,

15 [1]That reaved of their rulers they wretched had erstwhile[2]

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.

[2]

{The ideal Teutonic king lavishes gifts on his vassals.}

20 So the carle that is young, by kindnesses rendered

The friends of his father, with fees in abundance
 Must be able to earn that when age approacheth
 Eager companions aid him requitingly,
 When war assaults him serve him as liegemen:
 25 By praise-worthy actions must honor be got
 'Mong all of the races. At the hour that was fated
 {Scyld dies at the hour appointed by Fate.}
 Scyld then departed to the All-Father's keeping
 Warlike to wend him; away then they bare him
 To the flood of the current, his fond-loving comrades,
 30 As himself he had bidden, while the friend of the Scyldings
 Word-sway wielded, and the well-lovèd land-prince
 Long did rule them.[3] The ring-stemmèd vessel,
 Bark of the atheling, lay there at anchor,
 Icy in glimmer and eager for sailing;
 {By his own request, his body is laid on a vessel and wafted seaward.}
 35 The belovèd leader laid they down there,
 Giver of rings, on the breast of the vessel,
 The famed by the mainmast. A many of jewels,
 Of fretted embossings, from far-lands brought over,
 Was placed near at hand then; and heard I not ever
 40 That a folk ever furnished a float more superbly
 With weapons of warfare, weeds for the battle,
 Bills and burnies; on his bosom sparkled
 Many a jewel that with him must travel
 On the flush of the flood afar on the current.
 45 And favors no fewer they furnished him soothly,
 Excellent folk-gems, than others had given him
 {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
 [3] 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
 {No one knows whither the boat drifted.}
 Soothly to tell us, they in halls who reside,[4]
 Heroes under heaven, to what haven he hied.

[1] For the 'Ǣæt' of verse 15, Sievers suggests 'Ǣá' (= 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-rædenne.' If that be adopted, the passage will read: _Men cannot tell us, indeed, the order of Fate, etc._ 'Sele-rædenne' 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.

{Beowulf succeeds his father Scyld}
 In the boroughs then Beowulf, bairn 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,
 {He has three sons--one of them, Hrothgar--and a daughter named Elan.
 Hrothgar becomes a mighty king.}
 The well-beloved bedmate of the War-Scylfing leader.
 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
 {He is eager to build a great hall in which he may feast his retainers}
 Ever had heard of, and in it to share
 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
 [4] To many races in middle-earth's regions,
 To adorn the great folk-hall. In due time it happened
 Early 'mong men, that 'twas finished entirely,
 25 The greatest of hall-buildings; Heorot he named it
 {The hall is completed, and is called Heort, or Heorot.}
 Who wide-reaching word-sway wielded 'mong earlmen.
 His promise he brake not, rings he lavished,
 Treasure at banquet. Towered the hall up
 High and horn-crested, huge between antlers:
 30 It battle-waves bided, the blasting fire-demon;
 Ere long then from hottest hatred must sword-wrath
 Arise for a woman's husband and father.
 Then the mighty war-spirit[1] endured for a season,
 {The Monster Grendel is madly envious of the Danemen's joy.}
 Bore it bitterly, he who bided in darkness,
 35 That light-hearted laughter loud in the building
 Greeted him daily; there was dulcet harp-music,
 Clear song of the singer. He said that was able
 {[The course of the story is interrupted by a short reference to some old
 account of the creation.]}
 To tell from of old earthmen's beginnings,
 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.
 {The glee of the warriors is overcast by a horrible dread.}
 So blessed with abundance, brimming with joyance,
 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[2]
 50 Was Grendel entitled, the march-stepper famous
 Who[3] dwelt in the moor-fens, the marsh and the fastness;
 The wan-mooded being abode for a season
 [5] 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
 {Cain is referred to as a progenitor of Grendel, and of monsters in
 general.}
 The kindred of Cain crushed with His vengeance;

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.

GRENDEL THE MURDERER.

{Grendel attacks the sleeping heroes}

When the sun was sunken, he set out to visit
The lofty hall-building, how the Ring-Danes had used it
For beds and benches when the banquet was over.

Then he found there reposing many a noble
5 Asleep after supper; sorrow the heroes,[1]

Misery knew not. The monster of evil
Greedy and cruel tarried but little,
{He drags off thirty of them, and devours them}
Fell and frantic, and forced from their slumbers
Thirty of thanemen; thence he departed

10 Leaping and laughing, his lair to return to,
With surfeit of slaughter sallying homeward.
In the dusk of the dawning, as the day was just breaking,
Was Grendel's prowess revealed to the warriors:

{A cry of agony goes up, when Grendel's horrible deed is fully realized.}
Then, his meal-taking finished, a moan was uplifted,

15 Morning-cry mighty. The man-ruler famous,
The long-worthy atheling, sat very woful,
Suffered great sorrow, sighed for his liegemen,
[6] 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 [2]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[3] became
Certainly known to the children of men

Sadly in measures, that long against Hrothgar
Grendel struggled:--his grudges he cherished,
Murderous malice, many a winter,
40 Strife unremitting, and peacefully wished he
[4]Life-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

[7] On handsome amends at the hands of the murderer;
 {Grendel is unremitting in his persecutions.}
 45 The monster of evil fiercely did harass,
 The ill-planning death-shade, both elder and younger,
 Trapping and tricking them. He trod every night then
 The mist-covered moor-fens; men do not know where
 Witches and wizards wander and ramble.
 50 So the foe of mankind many of evils
 Grievous injuries, often accomplished,
 Horrible hermit; Heort he frequented,
 Gem-bedecked palace, when night-shades had fallen
 {God is against the monster.}
 (Since God did oppose him, not the throne could he touch,[5]
 55 The light-flashing jewel, love of Him knew not).
 'Twas a fearful affliction to the friend of the Scyldings
 {The king and his council deliberate in vain.}
 Soul-crushing sorrow. Not seldom in private
 Sat the king in his council; conference held they
 What the braves should determine 'gainst terrors unlooked for.
 {They invoke the aid of their gods.}
 60 At the shrines of their idols often they promised
 Gifts and offerings, earnestly prayed they
 The devil from hell would help them to lighten
 Their people's oppression. Such practice they used then,
 Hope of the heathen; hell they remembered
 65 In innermost spirit, God they knew not,
 {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 'sārcwidum': _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.

[8]

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,
 {Beowulf, the Geat, hero of the poem, hears of Hrothgar's sorrow, and
 resolves to go to his assistance.}
 Greatest of night-woes. So Higelac's liegeman,
 Good amid Geatmen, of Grendel's achievements
 Heard in his home:[1] 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.
 {With fourteen carefully chosen companions, he sets out for Dane-land.}
 The excellent knight from the folk of the Geatmen
 Had liegemen selected, likest to prove them
 Trustworthy warriors; with fourteen companions
 The vessel he looked for; a liegeman then showed them,
 20 A sea-crafty man, the bounds of the country.
 Fast the days fled; the float was a-water,
 The craft by the cliff. Clomb to the prow then
 Well-equipped warriors: the wave-currents twisted
 The sea on the sand; soldiers then carried
 25 On the breast of the vessel bright-shining jewels,
 Handsome war-armor; heroes outshoved then,
 Warmen the wood-ship, on its wished-for adventure.
 [9]
 {The vessel sails like a bird}
 The foamy-necked floater fanned by the breeze,
 Likest a bird, glided the waters,
 {In twenty four hours they reach the shores of Hrothgar's dominions}
 30 Till twenty and four hours thereafter
 The twist-stemmed vessel had traveled such distance
 That the sailing-men saw the sloping embankments,
 The sea cliffs gleaming, precipitous mountains,
 Nesses enormous: they were nearing the limits
 35 At the end of the ocean.[2] Up thence quickly
 The men of the Weders clomb to the mainland,
 Fastened their vessel (battle weeds rattled,
 War burnies clattered), the Wielder they thanked
 That the ways o'er the waters had waxen so gentle.
 {They are hailed by the Danish coast guard}
 40 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.
 45 High on his horse then Hrothgar's retainer
 Turned him to coastward, mightily brandished
 His lance in his hands, questioned with boldness.
 {His challenge}
 "Who are ye men here, mail-covered warriors
 Clad in your corslets, come thus a-driving
 50 A high riding ship o'er the shoals of the waters,
 [3]And hither 'neath helmets have hied o'er the ocean?
 [10] 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[4] adorned with his weapons,
 But launching them little, unless looks are deceiving,
 And striking appearance. Ere ye pass on your journey
 As treacherous spies to the land of the Scyldings
 65 And farther fare, I fully must know now
 What race ye belong to. Ye far-away dwellers,
 Sea-faring sailors, my simple opinion
 Hear ye and hearken: haste is most fitting
 Plainly to tell me what place ye are come from."

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

[2] 'Eoletes' (224) is marked with a (?) by H.-So.; our rendering simply follows his conjecture.--Other conjectures as to 'eolet' are: (1) _voyage_, (2) _toil_, _labor_, (3) _hasty journey_.

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

[4] 'Seld-guma' (249) is variously rendered: (1) _housecarle_; (2) _home-stayer_; (3) _common man_. Dr. H. Wood suggests _a man-at-arms in another's house_.

V.

THE GEATS REACH HEOROT.

{Beowulf courteously replies.}

The chief of the strangers rendered him answer,
 War-troopers' leader, and word-treasure opened:

{We are Geats.}

"We are sprung from the lineage of the people of Geatland,
 And Higelac's hearth-friends. To heroes unnumbered

{My father Ecgtheow was well-known in his day.}

5 My father was known, a noble head-warrior

Ecgtheow titled; many a winter

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

Old from his dwelling; each of the counsellors

Widely mid world-folk well remembers him.

{Our intentions towards King Hrothgar are of the kindest.}

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

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

[11] 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,[1]
Comfort come to him, and care-waves grow cooler,
25 Or ever hereafter he agony suffer
And troublous distress, while towereth upward
The handsomest of houses high on the summit."
{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.