

ootprint of foeman; too far had he gone
 With cunning craftiness close to the head of
 70 The fire-spewing dragon. So undoomed he may 'scape from
 Anguish and exile with ease who possesseth
 The favor of Heaven. The hoard-warden eagerly
 Searched o'er the ground then, would meet with the person
 That caused him sorrow while in slumber reclining:
 75 Gleaming and wild he oft went round the cavern,
 All of it outward; not any of earthmen
 Was seen in that desert.[6] Yet he joyed in the battle,
 Rejoiced in the conflict: oft he turned to the barrow,
 Sought for the gem-cup;[7] this he soon perceived then
 {The dragon perceives that some one has disturbed his treasure.}
 80 That some man or other had discovered the gold,
 The famous folk-treasure. Not fain did the hoard-ward
 Wait until evening; then the ward of the barrow
 Was angry in spirit, the loathèd one wished to
 Pay for the dear-valued drink-cup with fire.
 85 Then the day was done as the dragon would have it,
 He no longer would wait on the wall, but departed
 {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
 [79] Was the hateful air-goer willing to leave there.
 5 The war of the worm widely was noticed,
 The feud of the foeman afar and anear,
 How the enemy injured the earls of the Geatmen,
 Harried with hatred: back he hied to the treasure,
 To the well-hidden cavern ere the coming of daylight.
 10 He had circled with fire the folk of those regions,
 With brand and burning; in the barrow he trusted,
 In the wall and his war-might: the weening deceived him.
 {Beowulf hears of the havoc wrought by the dragon.}
 Then straight was the horror to Beowulf published,

Early forsooth, that his own native homestead,[1]
 15 The best of buildings, was burning and melting,
 Gift-seat of Geatmen. 'Twas a grief to the spirit
 Of the good-mooded hero, the greatest of sorrows:
 {He fears that Heaven is punishing him for some crime.}
 The wise one weened then that wielding his kingdom
 'Gainst the ancient commandments, he had bitterly angered
 20 The Lord everlasting: with lorn meditations
 His bosom welled inward, as was nowise his custom.
 The fire-spewing dragon fully had wasted
 The fastness of warriors, the water-land outward,
 The manor with fire. The folk-ruling hero,
 25 Prince of the Weders, was planning to wreak him.
 The warmen's defender bade them to make him,
 Earlmén'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.
 {He determines to fight alone.}
 Then the ring-prince disdained to seek with a war-band,
 35 With army extensive, the air-going ranger;
 He felt no fear of the foeman's assaults and
 He counted for little the might of the dragon,
 [80] His power and prowess: for previously dared he
 {Beowulf's early triumphs referred to}
 A heap of hostility, hazarded dangers,
 40 War-thane, when Hrothgar's palace he cleansèd,
 Conquering combatant, clutched in the battle
 The kinsmen of Grendel, of kindred detested.[2]
 {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,
 {Heardred's lack of capacity to rule.}
 Rings and dominion: her son she not trusted,
 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,
 {Reference is here made to a visit which Beowulf receives from Eanmund and
 Eadgils, why they come is not known.}
 Wielded the Weders. Wide-fleeing outlaws,
 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.

[81] 'Twas the end of his earth-days; injury fatal[3]

By swing of the sword he received as a greeting,
Offspring of Higelac; Ongentheow's bairn

Later departed to visit his homestead,

75 When Heardred was dead; let Beowulf rule them,

Govern the Geatmen: good was that folk-king.

[1] 'Hám' (2326), the suggestion of B. is accepted by t.B. and other scholars.

[2] For 'láðan cynnes' (2355), t.B. suggests 'láðan cynne,' apposition to 'mægum.' From syntactical and other considerations, this is a most excellent emendation.

[3] Gr. read 'on feorme' (2386), rendering: _He there at the banquet a fatal wound received by blows of the sword._

XXXIV.

BEOWULF SEEKS THE DRAGON.--BEOWULF'S REMINISCENCES.

He planned requital for the folk-leader's ruin

In days thereafter, to Eadgils the wretched

Becoming an enemy. Ohthere's son then

Went with a war-troop o'er the wide-stretching currents

5 With warriors and weapons: with woe-journeys cold he

After avenged him, the king's life he took.

{Beowulf has been preserved through many perils.}

So he came off uninjured from all of his battles,

Perilous fights, offspring of Ecgtheow,

From his deeds of daring, till that day most momentous

10 When he fate-driven fared to fight with the dragon.

{With eleven comrades, he seeks the dragon.}

With eleven companions the prince of the Geatmen

Went lowering with fury to look at the fire-drake:

Inquiring he'd found how the feud had arisen,

Hate to his heroes; the highly-famed gem-vessel

15 Was brought to his keeping through the hand of th' informer.

{A guide leads the way, but}

That in the throng was thirteenth of heroes,

That caused the beginning of conflict so bitter,

Captive and wretched, must sad-mooded thenceward

{very reluctantly.}

Point out the place: he passed then unwillingly

20 To the spot where he knew of the notable cavern,

The cave under earth, not far from the ocean,

The anger of eddies, which inward was full of

Jewels and wires: a warden uncanny,

[82] Warrior weaponed, wardered the treasure,

25 Old under earth; no easy possession

For any of earth-folk access to get to.

Then the battle-brave atheling sat on the naze-edge,

While the gold-friend of Geatmen gracious saluted

His fireside-companions: woe was his spirit,

30 Death-boding, wav'ring; Weird very near him,

Who must seize the old hero, his soul-treasure look for,

Dragging aloof his life from his body:

Not flesh-hidden long was the folk-leader's spirit.

Beowulf spake, Ecgtheow's son:

{Beowulf's retrospect.}

35 "I survived in my youth-days many a conflict,

Hours of onset: that all I remember.

I was seven-winters old when the jewel-prince took me,

High-lord of heroes, at the hands of my father,

Hrethel the hero-king had me in keeping,

{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
 {He treated me as a son.}
 Knight in the boroughs, than the bairns of his household,
 Herebald and Hæthcyn and Higelac mine.
 To the eldest unjustly by acts of a kinsman
 45 Was murder-bed strewn, since him Hæthcyn from horn-bow
 {One of the brothers accidentally kills another.}
 His sheltering chieftain shot with an arrow,
 Erred in his aim and injured his kinsman,
 One brother the other, with blood-sprinkled spear:
 {No fee could compound for such a calamity.}
 'Twas a feeless fight, finished in malice,
 50 Sad to his spirit; the folk-prince however
 Had to part from existence with vengeance untaken.
 {[A parallel case is supposed.]}
 So to hoar-headed hero 'tis heavily crushing[1]
 [83] To live to see his son as he rideth
 Young on the gallows: then measures he chanteth,
 55 A song of sorrow, when his son is hanging
 For the raven's delight, and aged and hoary
 He is unable to offer any assistance.
 Every morning his offspring's departure
 Is constant recalled: he cares not to wait for
 60 The birth of an heir in his borough-enclosures,
 Since that one through death-pain the deeds hath experienced.
 He heart-grieved beholds in the house of his son the
 Wine-building wasted, the wind-lodging places
 Reaved of their roaring; the riders are sleeping,
 65 The knights in the grave; there's no sound of the harp-wood,
 Joy in the yards, as of yore were familiar.
 [1] 'Gomelum ceorle' (2445).--H. takes these words as referring to
 Hrethel; but the translator here departs from his editor by
 understanding the poet to refer to a hypothetical old man, introduced
 as an illustration of a father's sorrow.
 Hrethel 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 2463-1/2 would be parenthetical, the poet's feelings
 being so strong as to interrupt the simile. The punctuation of the
 fourth edition would be better--a comma after 'galgan' (2447). The
 translation may be indicated as follows: _(Just) as it is sad for an
 old man to see his son ride young on the gallows when he himself is
 uttering mournful measures, a sorrowful song, while his son hangs for a
 comfort to the raven, and he, old and infirm, cannot render him any
 kelp--(he is constantly reminded, etc., 2451-2463)--so the defence of
 the Weders, etc._

XXXV.

REMINISCENCES (_continued_).--BEOWULF'S LAST BATTLE.

"He seeks then his chamber, singeth a woe-song
 One for the other; all too extensive
 Seemed homesteads and plains. So the helm of the Weders
 {Hrethel grieves for Herebald.}
 Mindful of Herebald heart-sorrow carried,
 5 Stirred with emotion, nowise was able
 To wreak his ruin on the ruthless destroyer:
 He was unable to follow the warrior with hatred,
 With deeds that were direful, though dear he not held him.
 [84] 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
 Cruellest 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
 25 With edges of irons egged on to murder,
 Where Ongentheow maketh onset on Eofor:
 The helmet crashed, the hoary-haired Scylfing
 Sword-smitten fell, his hand then remembered
 Feud-hate sufficient, refused not the death-blow.
 {I requited him for the jewels he gave me.}
 30 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
 35 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
 {Beowulf refers to his having slain Dæghrefn.}
 40 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.
 [85] 45 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:
 {He boasts of his youthful prowess, and declares himself still fearless.}
 50 "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-liegemen--his last salutation:
 "No brand would I bear, no blade for the dragon,
 Wist I a way my word-boast to 'comply[1]
 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[2]
 I'll not flee from a foot-length, the foeman uncanny.
 At the wall 'twill befall us as Fate decreeth,
 {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,
 [86] Direful death-woe will drag off your ruler!"
 75 The mighty champion rose by his shield then,
 Brave under helmet, in battle-mail went he
 'Neath steep-rising stone-cliffs, the strength he relied on
 Of one man alone: no work for a coward.
 Then he saw by the wall who a great many battles
 80 Had lived through, most worthy, when foot-troops collided,
 {The place of strife is described.}
 Stone-arches standing, stout-hearted champion,
 Saw a brook from the barrow bubbling out thenceward:
 The flood of the fountain was fuming with war-flame:
 Not nigh to the hoard, for season the briefest
 85 Could he brave, without burning, the abyss that was yawning,
 The drake was so fiery. The prince of the Weders
 Caused then that words came from his bosom,
 So fierce was his fury; the firm-hearted shouted:
 His battle-clear voice came in resounding
 90 'Neath the gray-colored stone. Stirred was his hatred,
 {Beowulf calls out under the stone arches.}
 The hoard-ward distinguished the speech of a man;
 Time was no longer to look out for friendship.
 The breath of the monster issued forth first,
 Vapory war-sweat, out of the stone-cave:
 {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,[3]
 To the death-planners twain was terror from other.
 {and stands against his shield.}
 The lord of the troopers intrepidly stood then
 'Gainst his high-rising shield, when the dragon coiled him
 {The dragon coils himself.}
 Quickly together: in corslet he bided.
 [87] 105 He went then in blazes, bended and striding,
 Hasting him forward. His life and body
 The targe well protected, for time-period shorter
 Than wish demanded for the well-renowned leader,
 Where he then for the first day was forced to be victor,
 110 Famous in battle, as Fate had not willed it.
 The lord of the Geatmen uplifted his hand then,
 Smiting the fire-drake with sword that was precious,
 That bright on the bone the blade-edge did weaken,
 Bit more feebly than his folk-leader needed,
 115 Burdened with bale-griefs. Then the barrow-protector,
 {The dragon rages}
 When the sword-blow had fallen, was fierce in his spirit,
 Flinging his fires, flamings of battle
 Gleamed then afar: the gold-friend of Weders
 {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):
 {The great hero is reduced to extremities.}
 Sorrow he suffered encircled with fire
 130 Who the people erst governed. His companions by no means
 Were banded about him, bairns of the princes,
 {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.
 [88]

[1] The clause 2520(2)-2522(1), rendered by 'Wist I ... monster,' Gr., followed by S., translates substantially as follows: _If I knew how else I might combat the boastful defiance of the monster_.--The translation turns upon 'wiðgrípan,' a word not understood.

[2] B. emends and translates: _I will not flee the space of a foot from the guard of the barrow, but there shall be to us a fight at the wall, as fate decrees, each one's Creator._

[3] The translation of this passage is based on 'unsláw' (2565), accepted by H.-So., in lieu of the long-standing 'ungléaw.' The former is taken as an adj. limiting 'sweord'; the latter as an adj. c. 'gúð-cyning': _The good war-king, rash with edges, brandished his sword, his old relic._ The latter gives a more rhetorical Anglo-Saxon (poetical) sentence.

XXXVI.

WIGLAF THE TRUSTY.--BEOWULF IS DESERTED BY FRIENDS AND BY SWORD.

{Wiglaf remains true--the ideal Teutonic liegeman.}
 The son of Weohstan was Wiglaf entitled,
 Shield-warrior precious, prince of the Scylfings,
 Ælfhere's kinsman: he saw his dear liegelord
 Enduring the heat 'neath helmet and visor.
 5 Then he minded the holding that erst he had given him,
 {Wiglaf recalls Beowulf's generosity.}
 The Wægmunding warriors' wealth-blessèd homestead,
 Each of the folk-rights his father had wielded;
 He was hot for the battle, his hand seized the target,
 The yellow-bark shield, he unsheathed his old weapon,
 10 Which was known among earthmen as the relic of Eanmund,
 Ohthere's offspring, whom, exiled and friendless,
 Weohstan did slay with sword-edge in battle,
 And carried his kinsman the clear-shining helmet,
 The ring-made burnie, the old giant-weapon
 15 That Onela gave him, his boon-fellow's armor,
 Ready war-trappings: he the feud did not mention,
 Though he'd fatally smitten the son of his brother.
 Many a half-year held he the treasures,
 The bill and the burnie, till his bairn became able,
 20 Like his father before him, fame-deeds to 'complish;
 Then he gave him 'mong Geatmen a goodly array of
 Weeds for his warfare; he went from life then
 Old on his journey. 'Twas the earliest time then
 {This is Wiglaf's first battle as liegeman of Beowulf.}
 That the youthful champion might charge in the battle
 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
 [89] 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,
 [1]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
 [90] 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.
 {Beowulf strikes at the dragon.}
 Then the warrior-king was careful of glory,
 He soundly smote with sword-for-the-battle,
 75 That it stood in the head by hatred driven;
 Nægling was shivered, the old and iron-made
 {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 [2]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.

[91]

XXXVII.

THE FATAL STRUGGLE.--BEOWULF'S LAST MOMENTS.

{Wiglaf defends Beowulf.}

Then I heard that at need of the king of the people
The upstanding earlman exhibited prowess,
Vigor and courage, as suited his nature;

[1]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[2]

{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[3]

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,

[92]

{Beowulf's wound swells and burns.}

The latest of world-deeds. The wound then began
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
{Wiglaf bathes his lord's head.}

Far-famous chieftain, gory from sword-edge,
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
 {I can rejoice in a well-spent life.}
 Oaths in injustice. Joy over all this
 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
 {Bring me the hoard, Wiglaf, that my dying eyes may be refreshed by a
 sight of it.}
 To behold the hoard 'neath the hoar-grayish stone,
 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
 [93] The ether-bright jewels, be easier able,
 55 Having the heap of hoard-gems, to yield my
 Life and the land-folk whom long I have governed."
 [1] B. renders: He (W.) did not regard his (the dragon's) head
 (since Beowulf had struck it without effect), but struck the dragon a
 little lower down.--One crux is to find out whose head is meant;
 another is to bring out the antithesis between 'head' and 'hand.'
 [2] 'Þæt þæt fýr' (2702), S. emends to 'þá þæt fýr' = when the fire
began to grow less intense afterward. This emendation relieves the
 passage of a plethora of conjunctive þæt's.
 [3] For 'gefyldan' (2707), S. proposes 'gefylde.' The passage would
 read: He felled the foe (life drove out strength), and they then both
had destroyed him, chieftains related. This gives Beowulf the credit
 of having felled the dragon; then they combine to annihilate him.--For
 'ellen' (2707), Kl. suggests 'e(a)llne.'--The reading 'life drove out
strength' is very unsatisfactory and very peculiar. I would suggest
 as follows: Adopt S.'s emendation, remove H.'s parenthesis, read
 'ferh-ellen wræc,' and translate: He felled the foe, drove out his
life-strength (that is, made him hors de combat), and then they
both, etc.
 XXXVIII.
 WIGLAF PLUNDERS THE DRAGON'S DEN.--BEOWULF'S DEATH.
 {Wiglaf fulfils his lord's behest.}
 Then heard I that Wihstan's son very quickly,
 These words being uttered, heeded his liegelord
 Wounded and war-sick, went in his armor,
 His well-woven ring-mail, 'neath the roof of the barrow.
 5 Then the trusty retainer treasure-gems many
 {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 bereavèd,
 Robbed of their ornaments: there were helmets in numbers,
 Old and rust-eaten, arm-bracelets many,
 Artfully woven. Wealth can easily,
 Gold on the sea-bottom, turn into vanity[1]
 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
 [94] 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; [2] the bill had erst injured
 (Its edge was of iron), the old-ruler's weapon,
 Him who long had watched as ward of the jewels,
 Who fire-terror carried hot for the treasure,
 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 liegeland beloved, at his life's-end gory:
 He thereupon 'gan to lave him with water,
 Till the point of his word piercèd his breast-hoard.
 40 Beowulf spake (the gold-gems he noticed),
 {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
 45 Gain for my people ere death overtook me.
 Since I've bartered the agèd 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-thenes; I can wait here no longer.
 The battle-famed bid ye to build them a grave-hill,
 50 Bright when I'm burned, at the brim-current's limit;
 As a memory-mark to the men I have governed,
 [95] Aloft it shall tower on Whale's-Ness uprising,
 That earls of the ocean hereafter may call it
 Beowulf's barrow, those who barks ever-dashing
 55 From a distance shall drive o'er the darkness of waters."
 {The hero's last gift}

The bold-mooded troop-lord took from his neck then
 The ring that was golden, gave to his liegeman,
 The youthful war-hero, his gold-flashing helmet,
 His collar and war-mail, bade him well to enjoy them:
 {and last words.}

60 "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 liegeland'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
 'gehwone,' 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

[96]

{Few warriors dared to face the monster.}

15 But few in the land of liegemen of valor,

Though of every achievement bold he had proved him,

To run 'gainst the breath of the venomous scather,

Or the hall of the treasure to trouble with hand-blows,

If he watching had found the ward of the hoard-hall

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[1]

Would govern the actions of each one of heroes,

{Wiglaf is ready to excoriate them.}

As yet He is doing. From the young one forthwith then

Could grim-worded greeting be got for him quickly

40 Whose courage had failed him. Wiglaf discoursed then,

Weohstan his son, sad-mooded hero,

{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,--

[97]

{Surely our lord wasted his armor on poltroons.}

That he wildly wasted his war-gear undoubtedly

When battle o'ertook him.[2] 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 overtaking):

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 bereaved 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.

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

Then he charged that the battle be announced at the hedge

Up o'er the cliff-edge, where the earl-troopers bided

The whole of the morning, mood-wretched sat them,

Bearers of battle-shields, both things expecting,

5 The end of his lifetime and the coming again of

The liegelord 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:

[98]

{The messenger speaks.}

"Now the free-giving friend-lord of the folk of the Weders,

10 The folk-prince of Geatmen, is fast in his death-bed,

By the deeds of the dragon in death-bed abideth;

Along with him lieth his life-taking foeman

Slain with knife-wounds: he was wholly unable

To injure at all the ill-planning monster

{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,[1]

{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 overnight 'complished
That the mail-clad warrior must sink in the battle,
Fell 'mid his folk-troop: no fret-gems presented
The atheling to earlmen; aye was denied us
Merewing's mercy. The men of the Swedelands
30 For truce or for truth trust I but little;
But widely 'twas known that near Ravenswood Ongentheow
{Hæthcyn's fall referred to.}

Sundered Hæthcyn the Hrethling from life-joys,
When for pride overweening the War-Scylfings first did
Seek the Geatmen with savage intentions.
35 Early did Ohthere's age-laden father,
Old and terrible, give blow in requital,
Killing the sea-king, the queen-mother rescued,
The old one his consort deprived of her gold,
Onela's mother and Ohthere's also,
[99] 40 And then followed the feud-nursing foemen till hardly,
Reaved of their ruler, they Ravenswood entered.
Then with vast-numbered forces he assaulted the remnant,
Weary with wounds, woe often promised
The livelong night to the sad-hearted war-troop:
45 Said he at morning would kill them with edges of weapons,
Some on the gallows for glee to the fowls.

Aid came after to the anxious-in-spirit
At dawn of the day, after Higelac's bugle
And trumpet-sound heard they, when the good one proceeded
50 And faring followed the flower of the troopers.
[1] 'Hige-méðum' (2910) is glossed by H. as dat. plu. (= for the
dead). S. proposes 'hige-méðe,' nom. sing. limiting Wigláf; i.e. _W.,
mood-weary, holds head-watch o'er friend and foe_--B. suggests taking
the word as dat. inst. plu. of an abstract noun in -'u.' The
translation would be substantially the same as S.'s.

XLI.

THE MESSENGER'S RETROSPECT.

{The messenger continues, and refers to the feuds of Swedes and Geats.}
"The blood-stained trace of Swedes and Geatmen,
The death-rush of warmen, widely was noticed,
How the folks with each other feud did awaken.
The worthy one went then[1] 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[2] to Higelac.
[100] 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 wounds Ongentheow.}

Wulf then wildly with weapon assaulted him,
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.
{Eofor smites Ongentheow fiercely.}
Then Higelac's vassal, valiant and dauntless,
When his brother lay dead, made his broad-bladed weapon,
Giant-sword ancient, defence of the giants,
35 Bound o'er the shield-wall; the folk-prince succumbed then,
{Ongentheow is slain.}
Shepherd of people, was pierced to the vitals.