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Title: Beowulf

An Anglo-Saxon Epic Poem, Translated From The Heyne-Socin  
Text by Lesslie Hall

Author:

Release Date: July 19, 2005 [EBook #16328]

Language: English

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# BEOWULF

## AN ANGLO- SAXON EPIC POEM

*TRANSLATED  
FROM THE HEYNE-  
SOCIN TEXT*

BY

JNO: LESSLIE HALL,  
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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 wofully harried by a fire-spewing dragon. Beowulf determines to kill him. In the ensuing struggle both Beowulf and the dragon are slain. The grief of the Geats is inexpressible. They determine, however, to leave nothing undone to honor the memory of their lord. A great funeral-pyre is built, and his body is burnt. Then a*



*memorial-barrow is made, visible from a great distance, that sailors afar may be constantly reminded of the prowess of the national hero of Geatland.*

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



It is the devout desire of this translator to hasten the day when the story of Beowulf shall be as

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

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

J.L. HALL.

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

# ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES.

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



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# GLOSSARY OF PROPER NAMES.

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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.]

---

**Ælfhere.**—A kinsman of Wiglaf.

**Æschere.**—Confidential friend of King Hrothgar. Elder brother of Yrmenlaf. Killed by Grendel.—21 3; 30 89.

**Beanstan.**—Father of Breca.—9 26.

**Beowulf.**—Son of Scyld, the founder of the dynasty of Scyldings. Father of Healfdene, and grandfather of Hrothgar.—1 18; 2 1.

**Beowulf.**—The hero of the poem. Sprung from the stock of

Geats, son of Ecgtheow. Brought up by his maternal grandfather Hrethel, and figuring in manhood as a devoted liegeman of his uncle Higelac. A hero from his youth. Has the strength of thirty men. Engages in a swimming-match with Breca. Goes to the help of Hrothgar against the monster Grendel. Vanquishes Grendel and his mother. Afterwards becomes king of

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

**Breca.**—Beowulf's opponent in the famous swimming-match. —9 8; 9 19; 9 21; 9 22.

**Brondings.**—A people ruled by Breca.—9 23.

**Brosinga mene.**—A famous collar once owned by the



Brosings.—19 7.

**Cain.**—Progenitor of Grendel and other monsters.—2 56; 20 11.

**Dæghrefn.**—A warrior of the Hugs, killed by Beowulf.—35 40.

**Danes.**—Subjects of Scyld and his descendants, and hence often called Scyldings. Other names for them are Victory-Scyldings, Honor-Scyldings, Armor-Danes, Bright-Danes, East-Danes, West-Danes, North-Danes, South-Danes, Ingwins,

Hrethmen.—1 1; 2 1; 3 2;  
5 14; 7 1, etc.

**Ecglaf.**—Father of Unferth, who  
taunts Beowulf.—9 1.

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

**Ecgwela.**—A king of the Danes  
before Scyld.—25 60.

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

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

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

**Eanmund.**—Son of Ohthere and brother of Eadgils. The reference to these brothers is vague, and variously

understood. Heyne supposes as follows: Raising a revolt against their father, they are obliged to leave Sweden. They go to the land of the Geats; with what intention, is not known, but probably to conquer and plunder. The Geatish king, Heardred, is slain by one of the brothers, probably Eanmund.—36 10; 31 54 to 31 60; 33 66 to 34 6.

**Eofor.**—A Geatish hero who slays Ongentheow in war, and is

rewarded by Hygelac with the hand of his only daughter.—41 18; 41 48.

**Eormenric.**—A Gothic king, from whom Hama took away the famous 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.

**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 liegeland, as his lamentations over slain liegemen prove. Also very appreciative of kindness, as is shown by his loving gratitude to Beowulf.  
—2 9; 2 12; 4 1; 8 10; 15 1; etc., etc.

**Hrothmund.**—Son of Hrothgar.  
—18 65.

**Hrothulf.**—Probably a son of Halga, younger brother of

Hrothgar. Certainly on terms of close intimacy in Hrothgar's palace.—16 26; 18 57.

**Hrunting.**—Unferth's sword, lent to Beowulf.—22 71; 25 9.

**Hugs.**—A race in alliance with the Franks and Frisians at the time of Higelac's fall.—35 41.

**Hun.**—A Frisian warrior, probably general of the Hetwars. Gives Hengest a beautiful sword.—18 19.

**Hunferth.**—Sometimes used for Unferth.

**Hygelac, Higelac.**—King of the Geats, uncle and 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 Higelac's and Ongentheow's forces,

and had a hand-to-hand fight with Ongentheow himself. Ongentheow disables him, and is thereupon slain by Eofof.—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’).

WEEDED.—Clad (cf. widow’s  
weeds).

WEEN.—Suppose, imagine.

WEIRD.—Fate, Providence.



WHILOM.—At times, formerly, often.

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

WIGHT.—Creature.

WOLD.—Plane, extended surface.

WOT.—Knows.

YOUNKER.—Youth.



# BEOWULF.

**I.**

# THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SCYLD.

The famous race of Spear-Danes.  
Lo! the Spear-Danes' glory through  
splendid achievements  
The folk-kings' former fame we  
have heard of,  
How princes displayed then their  
prowess-in-battle.  
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

<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.

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.<sup>3</sup> The ring-  
stemmed 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 beloved 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

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,<sup>4</sup>

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.**

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, aged.

Healfdene's birth.

Four bairns of his body born in  
succession

Woke in the world, war-troopers'  
leader

Heorogar, Hrothgar, and Halga the  
good;

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

Obedyed 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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<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

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,

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,<sup>1</sup>

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,

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  
otherwhere looked for

25

A pleasanter place of repose in the  
lodges,

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

Told him truly by token apparent  
The hall-thane's hatred: he held

himself after

Further and faster who the foeman  
did baffle.

30

<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>3</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,  
40

Strife unremitting, and peacefully

wished he

<sup>4</sup>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

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,<sup>5</sup>

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

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,

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:<sup>1</sup> 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,

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 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.<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.

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,

A 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,

<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.

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,

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



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

To the prince of the Scyldings. Pass  
ye then onward

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 boat shall be well cared for  
during your stay here.

Your fresh-tarred craft, 'gainst  
every opposer

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,

50

The well-fashioned wassail-hall  
wondrous and gleaming:

Heorot flashes on their view.

'Mid world-folk and kindreds that  
was widest reputed

Of halls under heaven which the  
hero abode in;

Its lustre enlightened lands without  
number.

Then the battle-brave hero showed  
them the glittering

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:

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

“’Tis time I were faring; Father  
Almighty

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 ‘gúðmódgum  
men’ (306).

# VI.



# **BEOWULF INTRODUCES HIMSELF AT THE PALACE.**

The highway glistened with many-  
hued pebble,  
A by-path led the liegemen together.  
<sup>1</sup>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

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

Were decked with weapons. Then a  
proud-mooded hero

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.”

Beowulf replies.

Then the strength-famous earlman  
answer rendered,

The proud-mooded Wederchief  
replied to his question,

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

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

Beowulf hight I. To the bairn of  
Healfdene,

The famous folk-leader, I freely  
will tell

To thy prince my commission, if  
pleasantly hearing

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

30

Wulfgar replied then (he was prince  
of the Wendels,

His boldness of spirit was known

unto many,

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

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

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

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

35

The folk-chief famous, and inform  
thee early

What answer the good one mindeth

to render me.”

He turned then hurriedly where  
Hrothgar was sitting,

<sup>2</sup>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



He thereupon urges his liegelord to  
receive the visitors courteously.

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

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!

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

In war-trappings weeded worthy  
they seem

50

Of earls to be honored; sure the  
atheling is doughty  
Who headed the heroes hitherward  
coming.”

[1] Instead of the punctuation given by H.-So, S. proposed to insert a comma after ‘scír’ (322), and to take ‘hring-íren’ as meaning ‘ring-mail’ and as parallel with ‘gúð-

byrne.’ The passage would then read: *The firm and hand-locked war-burnie shone, bright ring-mail, rang ’mid the armor, etc.*

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



## VII.

# HROTHGAR AND BEOWULF.

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

Hrothgar answered, helm of the  
Scyldings:

“I remember this man as the merest  
of striplings.

His father long dead now was  
Ecgtheow titled,

Him Hrethel the Geatman granted at

home his

5

One only daughter; his battle-brave  
son

Is come but now, sought a  
trustworthy friend.

Seafaring sailors asserted it then,  
Beowulf is reported to have the  
strength of thirty men.

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

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

10

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

God hath sent him to our rescue.

The holy Creator usward sent him,  
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 invites the strangers in.  
Wulfgar went then, this word-  
message shouted:

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):

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

achievements.

35

“Hail thou, Hrothgar! I am  
Higelac’s kinsman

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

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

75

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

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

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

Find me my food.<sup>7</sup> If I fall in the  
battle,

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 ‘Geátena leóde’: but to take it as an adv. is more natural.

Furthermore, to call the Geats 'brave' might, at this point, seem like an implied thrust at the Danes, so long helpless; while to call his own men 'timid' would be befouling his own nest.

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

undertaker),—grim humor.

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

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



# VIII.

# HROTHGAR AND BEOWULF. —*Continued.*

Hrothgar 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  
grimmet of edges.

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

The building was bloody at  
breaking of daylight,

30

The bench-deals all flooded,  
dripping and bloodied,

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

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

Sit down to the feast, and give us  
comfort.

Sit at the feast now, thy intents unto

heroes,<sup>2</sup>

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

A bench is made ready for Beowulf  
and his party.

35

For the men of the Geats then  
together assembled,

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

There warlike in spirit they went to  
be seated,

Proud and exultant. A liegeman did  
service,



Who a beaker embellished bore  
with decorum,  
The gleeman sings

40

And gleaming-drink poured. The  
gleeman sang whilom  
The heroes all rejoice together.

Hearty in Heorot; there was heroes'  
rejoicing,

A numerous war-band of Weders  
and Danemen.

[1] B. and S. reject the reading given in  
H.-So., and suggested by Grtv. B.

suggests for 457-458:

wære-ryhtum þú, wine mín  
    Béowulf,  
and for ár-stafum úsíc sóhtest.

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

[2] *Sit now at the feast, and disclose thy purposes to the victorious*

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

# IX.

# UNFERTH TAUNTS BEOWULF.

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

Unferth spoke up, Ecglaf his son,  
Who sat at the feet of the lord of the  
Scyldings,  
Opened the jousting (the journey<sup>1</sup> 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,

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,

Where your arms outstretching the  
streams ye did cover,

The mere-ways measured, mixing  
and stirring them,

Glided the ocean; angry the waves  
were,

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

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

20

In strength excelled thee. Then early  
at morning

On the Heathoremes' shore the



holm-currents tossed him,  
Sought he thenceward the home of  
his fathers,  
Beloved of his liegemen, the land of  
the Brondings,  
The peace-castle pleasant, where a  
people he wielded,

25

Had borough and jewels. The  
pledge that he made thee  
Breca outdid you entirely.  
The son of Beanstan hath soothly  
accomplished.

Then I ween thou wilt find thee less

fortunate issue,

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

Though ever triumphant in onset of  
battle,

A grim grappling, if Grendel thou  
darest

30

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

Beowulf 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,

35

That greater strength in the waters I  
had then,

Ills in the ocean, than any man else  
had.

We made agreement as the merest of

striplings

Promised each other (both of us  
then were

We simply kept an engagement made  
in early life.

Younkers in years) that we yet  
would adventure

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

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

To swim on the waters further than I  
could,

45

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

Then we two companions stayed in  
the ocean

After five days the currents  
separated us.

Five nights together, till the currents

did part us,

The weltering waters, weathers the  
bleakest,

And nethermost night, and the north-  
wind whistled

50

Fierce in our faces; fell were the  
billows.

The mere fishes' mood was mightily  
ruffled:

And there against foemen my firm-  
knotted corslet,

Hand-jointed, hardy, help did afford  
me;

My battle-sark braided, brilliantly  
gilded,

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

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

[1] It has been plausibly suggested that ‘síd’ (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,

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

Put to sleep with the sword, that

sea-going travelers

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<sup>1</sup> 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,

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

The weltering waves. Not a word  
hath been told me

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;

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

30

Though with cold-blooded cruelty  
thou killedst thy brothers,

Thy nearest of kin; thou needs must  
in hell get

Direful damnation, though doughty  
thy wisdom.

I tell thee in earnest, offspring of  
Ecglaf,

Never had Grendel such numberless  
horrors,

35

The direful demon, done to thy  
liegelord,

Harrying in Heorot, if thy heart  
were as sturdy,

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



Thy mood as ferocious as thou dost  
describe them.

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  
The monster is not afraid of the  
Danes,

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

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

On the second day, any warrior may

go unmolested to the mead-banquet.  
Which the second day bringeth, the  
sun in its ether-robes,  
O'er children of men shines from  
the southward!"

50

Then the gray-haired, war-famed  
giver of treasure  
Hrothgar's spirits are revived.  
Was blithesome and joyous, the  
Bright-Danish ruler  
Expected assistance; the people's  
protector  
The old king trusts Beowulf. The

heroes are joyful.

Heard from Beowulf his bold  
resolution.

There was laughter of heroes; loud  
was the clatter,

55

The words were winsome.

Wealththeow advanced then,  
Queen Wealththeow plays the  
hostess.

Consort of Hrothgar, of courtesy  
mindful,

Gold-decked saluted the men in the  
building,

And the freeborn woman the beaker  
presented

She offers the cup to her husband  
first.

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

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:

She gives presents to the heroes.

65

Treasure-cups tendered, till time  
was afforded

That the decorous-mooded,  
diademed folk-queen

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

Might bear to Beowulf the bumper  
o'errunning;

She greeted the Geat-prince, God

she did thank,

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

70

That in any of earlmen she ever  
should look for

Solace in sorrow. He accepted the  
beaker,

Battle-bold warrior, at  
Wealhtheow's giving,

Beowulf states to the queen the  
object of his visit.

Then equipped for combat quoth he  
in measures,

Beowulf spake, offspring of  
Ecgtheow:

75

“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,



80

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

These words to the lady were  
welcome and pleasing,

The boast of the Geatman; with gold  
trappings broidered

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

Glee is high.

Then again as of yore was heard in  
the building

85

Courtly discussion, conquerors’

shouting,

Heroes were happy, till Healfdene's  
son would

Go to his slumber to seek for  
refreshing;

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

A fight was determined,<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 Þær' for the first: *So there it befell me, etc.* Another suggestion is to change the second 'hwæðere' into 'swá Þær': *So there I escaped with my life, etc.*

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

# XI.

# ALL SLEEP SAVE ONE.

Hrothgar retires.

Then Hrothgar departed, his earl-  
throng attending him,  
Folk-lord of Scyldings, forth from  
the building;  
The war-chieftain wished then  
Wealththeow 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:

Beowulf boasts of his ability to cope  
with Grendel.

“I hold me no meaner in matters of  
prowess,

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.

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,  
God may decide who shall conquer  
On which hand soever to him

seemeth proper.”

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

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

That ever thereafter any should  
hope to

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,  
God rules the world.

40

By the might of himself; the truth is  
established  
That God Almighty hath governed  
for ages  
Kindreds and nations. A night very  
lurid

Grendel comes to Heorot.

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

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

Only one warrior is awake.

45

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.

Grendel comes from the fens.

'Neath the cloudy cliffs came from  
the moor then

Grendel going, God's anger bare he.  
The monster intended some one of  
earthmen

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

He goes towards the joyous building.

5

He went under welkin where well  
he knew of

The wine-joyous building, brilliant  
with plating,

Gold-hall of earthmen. Not the  
earliest occasion

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<sup>1</sup> more

sturdy!

Then came to the building the  
warrior marching,

His horrid fingers tear the door open.

Bereft of his joyance. The door  
quickly opened

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

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

15

Open the entrance. Early thereafter  
The foeman trod the shining hall-  
pavement,

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

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

25

The prospect of plenty. Providence  
willed not

To permit him any more of men  
under heaven

To eat in the night-time. Higelac's  
kinsman



Great sorrow endured how the dire-  
mooded creature

In unlooked-for assaults were likely  
to bear him.

30

No thought had the monster of  
deferring the matter,

Grendel immediately seizes a  
sleeping warrior, and devours him.

But on earliest occasion he quickly  
laid hold of

A soldier asleep, suddenly tore him,  
Bit his bone-prison, the blood drank  
in currents,

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

35

Feet and hands, too, eaten entirely.  
Nearer he strode then, the stout-  
hearted warrior

Beowulf and Grendel grapple.

Snatched as he slumbered, seizing  
with hand-grip,

Forward the foeman foined with his  
hand;

Caught he quickly the cunning  
deviser,

40

On his elbow he rested. This early  
discovered

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

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

The monster is amazed at Beowulf's  
strength.

In any man else had he ever  
encountered:

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 a luckless day for Grendel.

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

Grendel's cries terrify the Danes.

75



Novel enough; on the North Danes  
fastened

A terror of anguish, on all of the  
men there

Who heard from the wall the  
weeping and plaining,

The song of defeat from the foeman  
of heaven,

Heard him hymns of horror howl,  
and his sorrow

80

Hell-bound bewailing. He held him  
too firmly

Who was strongest of main-strength

of men of that era.

- [1] B. and t.B. emend so as to make lines 9 and 10 read: *Never in his life, earlier or later, had he, the hell-thane, found a braver hero.*— They argue that Beowulf's companions had done nothing to merit such encomiums as the usual readings allow them.
- [2] For 'réðe rén-weardas' (771), t.B. suggests 'réðe, rénhearde.' Translate: *They were both angry, raging and mighty.*



# XIII.

# **GRENDEL IS VANQUISHED.**

Beowulf has no idea of letting  
Grendel live.

For no cause whatever would the  
earlmen's defender  
Leave in life-joys the loathsome  
newcomer,  
He deemed his existence utterly  
useless

To men under heaven. Many a noble

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

10

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<sup>1</sup> 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,

Beowulf suspends Grendel's hand  
and arm in Heorot.

When the hero-in-battle the hand  
suspended,

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

45

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

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

# XIV.

# REJOICING OF THE DANES.

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

In the mist of the morning many a  
warrior

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

Folk-princes fared then from far and  
from near

Through long-stretching journeys to

look at the wonder,

5

The footprints of the foeman. Few  
of the warriors

Few warriors lamented Grendel's  
destruction.

Who gazed on the foot-tracks of the  
inglorious creature

His parting from life pained very  
deeply,

How, weary in spirit, off from those  
regions

In combats conquered he carried his  
traces,



10

Fated and flying, to the flood of the  
nickers.

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,

He is regarded as a probable  
successor to Hrothgar.

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

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

25

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

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

But no word is uttered to derogate  
from the old king

Of Hrothgar the gracious (a good  
king he).

Oft the famed ones permitted their  
fallow-skinned horses  
To run in rivalry, racing and  
chasing,

30

Where the fieldways appeared to  
them fair and inviting,

Known for their excellence; oft a  
thane of the folk-lord,<sup>2</sup>

The gleeman sings the deeds of

heroes.

<sup>3</sup>A man of celebrity, mindful of  
rhythms,  
Who ancient traditions treasured in  
memory,  
New word-groups found properly  
bound:

35

The bard after 'gan then Beowulf's  
venture

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>

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

Afterward Heremod's hero-strength  
failed him,

65

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

foully delivered,

Offdriven early. Agony-billows

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

Oppressed him too long, to his  
people he became then,  
To all the athelings, an ever-great  
burden;

70  
And the daring one's journey in  
days of yore

Many wise men were wont to  
deplore,

Such as hoped he would bring them  
    help in their sorrow,  
That the son of their ruler should  
    rise into power,  
Holding the headship held by his  
    fathers,

75

Should govern the people, the gold-  
    hoard and borough,  
The kingdom of heroes, the realm of  
    the Scyldings.

Beowulf is an honor to his race.  
He to all men became then far more  
    beloved,

Higelac's kinsman, to kindreds and  
races,

To his friends much dearer; him  
malice assaulted.—

The story is resumed.

80

Oft running and racing on roadsters  
they measured

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

Was hurried and hastened. Went  
henchmen in numbers

To the beautiful building, bold ones  
in spirit,

To look at the wonder; the liegelord  
himself then

85

From his wife-bower wending,  
warden of treasures,

Glorious trod with troopers  
unnumbered,

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

Measured the mead-ways, with  
maidens attending.

[1] S. emends, suggesting ‘déop’ for  
‘déog,’ and removing semicolon

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

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

*skilfully to narrate it, etc.*

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

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



# XV.

# HROTHGAR'S GRATITUDE.

Hrothgar discoursed (to the hall-  
building went he,  
He stood by the pillar,<sup>1</sup> saw the  
steep-rising hall-roof  
Gleaming with gold-gems, and  
Grendel his hand there):  
Hrothgar gives thanks for the  
overthrow of the monster.  
“For the sight we behold now,

thanks to the Wielder

5

Early be offered! Much evil I bided,  
Snaring from Grendel:<sup>2</sup> God can  
e'er 'complish

Wonder on wonder, Wielder of  
Glory!

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

But lately I reckoned ne'er under  
heaven

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

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

Failed to perform. May affirm very  
truly

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,

Hereafter, Beowulf, thou shalt be my  
son.

Most excellent hero, I'll love thee  
in spirit

As bairn of my body; bear well  
henceforward

The relationship new. No lack shall  
befall thee

25

Of earth-joys any I ever can give  
thee.

Full often for lesser service I've  
given

Hero less hardy hoard-treasure  
precious,

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

30

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

35

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

Thou wert able to look at the  
creature in person,

Faint unto falling, the foe in his  
trappings!

On murder-bed quickly I minded to



bind him,

With firm-holding fetters, that  
forced by my grapple

40

Low he should lie in life-and-death  
struggle

'Less his body escape; I was  
wholly unable,

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

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

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,

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

From boasting and bragging of  
battle-achievements,

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;

Each finger-nail strong steel most  
resembled,

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

Claw most uncanny; quoth they  
agreeing,

No sword will harm the monster.

That not any excellent edges of  
brave ones

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 ‘gehwylcne’ as object of ‘wíd-scofen (hæfde).’ Gr. construes ‘wéa’ as nom abs.

# XVI.

# **HROTHGAR LAVISHES GIFTS UPON HIS DELIVERER.**

Heorot is adorned with hands.  
Then straight was ordered that  
Heorot inside<sup>1</sup>  
With hands be embellished: a host  
of them gathered,  
Of men and women, who the



wassailing-building

The guest-hall be geared. Gold-  
flashing sparkled

5

Webs on the walls then, of wonders  
a many

To each of the heroes that look on  
such objects.

The 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

[A vague passage of five verses.]  
(Whoever will do it!); but he  
doubtless must come to<sup>2</sup>  
The place awaiting, as Wyrd 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's nephew, Hrothulf, is  
present.

Hrothgar and Hrothulf. Heorot then  
inside

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

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

Forth against foemen. The defender  
of earls then

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 ‘gefrætword’: 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.**

Each of Beowulf's companions  
receives a costly gift.

And the atheling of earlmen to each  
of the heroes

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

The warrior killed by Grendel is to  
be paid for in gold.

5

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

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

Touching Healfdene's leader; the  
joy-wood was fingered,  
Measures recited, when the singer  
of Hrothgar

On mead-bench should mention the  
merry hall-joyance

Of the kinsmen of Finn, when onset  
surprised them:

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

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



On the field of the Frisians was  
fated to perish.

Sure Hildeburg needed not mention  
approving

The faith of the Jutemen: though  
blameless entirely,

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

When shields were shivered she  
was shorn of her darlings,

Of bairns and brothers: they bent to  
their fate

25

With war-spear wounded; woe was  
that woman.

Not causeless lamented the daughter  
of Hoce

The decree of the Wielder when  
morning-light came and

She was able 'neath heaven to  
behold the destruction

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

Finn's force is almost exterminated.

30

She had hitherto had: all the

henchmen of Finn

War had oftaken, save a handful  
remaining,

That he nowise was able to offer  
resistance<sup>1</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,

Compact between the Frisians and  
the Danes.

Another great building to fully make  
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  
Equality of gifts agreed on.

On the bench of the beer-hall. On  
both sides they swore then  
A fast-binding compact; Finn unto  
Hengest

45

With no thought of revoking vowed  
then most solemnly

The woe-begone remnant well to  
take charge of,

His Witan advising; the agreement  
should no one

By words or works weaken and  
shatter,

By artifice ever injure its value,  
50

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

They followed as vassals, Fate so  
requiring:

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,

Queen Hildeburg has her son burnt  
along with Hnæf.

The bairn of her bosom to bear to  
the fire,

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 eaxe’ 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 eaxle gnornode.’

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

# XVIII.

**THE FINN EPISODE**  
**(*continued*).—THE**  
**BANQUET**  
**CONTINUES.**

The survivors go to Friesland, the home of Finn.

“Then the warriors departed to go  
to their dwellings,  
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;<sup>1</sup> of fatherland  
thought he

Though unable to drive the ring-  
stemmed 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>

Finn is slain.

With corpses of foemen, and Finn  
too was slaughtered,

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

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

30

The troops of the Scyldings bore to  
their vessels

All that the land-king had in his

palace,

Such trinkets and treasures they took  
as, on searching,

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

The excellent woman on oversea  
journey,

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

35

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

Queen Wealhtheow greets Hrothgar,  
as he sits beside Hrothulf, his  
nephew.

40

Uncle and nephew; their peace was  
yet mutual,

True each to the other. And Unferth

the spokesman

Sat at the feet of the lord of the  
Scyldings:

Each trusted his spirit that his mood  
was courageous,  
Though at fight he had failed in faith  
to his kinsmen.

45

Said the queen of the Scyldings:

“My lord and protector,  
Treasure-bestower, take thou this  
beaker;  
Joyance attend thee, gold-friend of  
heroes,

Be generous to the Geats.

And greet thou the Geatmen with  
gracious responses!

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;

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

Give while thou mayest many  
rewards,

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

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

He'll care for and honor, lord of the

Scyldings,

If earth-joys thou endest earlier than  
he doth;

60

I reckon that recompense he'll  
render with kindness

Our offspring and issue, if that all  
he remember,

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

We awarded to him for his worship  
and pleasure.”

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



Hrethric and Hrothmund, and the  
 heroes' offspring,

Beowulf is sitting by the two royal  
 sons.

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

'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 (swíðe), needs no argument; and 'unflitme' (from 'flítan') 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,

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

Since Hama off bore the

Brosingmen's necklace,

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<sup>2</sup> corpse of the king then came  
into charge of

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

20

Warmen less noble plundered the  
fallen,

When the fight was finished; the  
folk of the Geatmen

The field of the dead held in  
possession.

The choicest of mead-halls with  
cheering resounded.

Wealththeo discoursed, the war-  
troop addressed she:

Queen Wealththeow magnifies  
Beowulf's achievements.

25

“This collar enjoy thou, Beowulf  
worthy,

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

Gems of the people, and prosper

thou fully,

Show thyself sturdy and be to these  
liegemen

Mild with instruction! I'll mind thy  
requital.

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:

They little know of the sorrow in  
store for them.

Weird they knew not, destiny cruel,  
As to many an earlman early it  
happened,

When evening had come and  
Hrothgar had parted

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 doomedthane 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>1</sup> the  
gold-bedecked palace,  
Ill-deeds performing, till his end  
overtook him,

Death for his sins. 'Twas seen very  
clearly,

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

Known unto earth-folk, that still an  
avenger

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,

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

The cold-flowing currents, after

Cain had become a

Slayer-with-edges to his one only  
brother,

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

Marked as a murderer, man-joys  
avoiding,

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,

Beowulf was asleep in another part

of the palace.

But another apartment was  
erstwhile devoted  
To the glory-decked Geatman when  
gold was distributed.

There was hubbub in Heorot. The  
hand that was famous

She grasped in its gore;<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-aged ruler,  
The gray-headed war-thane, was  
woful in spirit,  
When his long-trusted liegeman  
lifeless he knew of,  
Beowulf is sent for.

60

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,

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

The earl of the Ingwins;<sup>5</sup> asked if  
the night had

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,

He was my ideal hero.

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

An erst-worthy atheling, as  
Æschere proved him.

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,

This horrible creature came to  
avenge Grendel's death.

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

That last night igone Grendel thou  
killedst

15

In grewsomest manner, with grim-

holding clutches,

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

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

With forfeit of life, and another has  
followed,

A mighty crime-worker, her  
kinsman avenging,

20

And henceforth hath 'stablished her  
hatred unyielding,<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.

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

25

Land-people heard I, liegemen, this  
saying,

Dwellers in halls, they had seen  
very often



A pair of such mighty march-  
striding creatures,  
Far-dwelling spirits, holding the  
moorlands:

One of them wore, as well they  
might notice,

30

The image of woman, the other one  
wretched

In guise of a man wandered in exile,  
Except he was huger than any of  
earthmen;

Earth-dwelling people entitled him  
Grendel

In days of yore: they know not their  
father,

35

Whe'r ill-going spirits any were  
borne him

The inhabit the most desolate and  
horrible places.

Ever before. They guard the wolf-  
coverts,

Lands inaccessible, wind-beaten  
nesses,

Fearfullest fen-deeps, where a  
flood from the mountains

'Neath mists of the nesses

netherward rattles,

40

The stream under earth: not far is it  
henceward

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

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

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

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

Spurred from afar, his spirit he  
yieldeth,

50

His life on the shore, ere in he will  
venture

To cover his head. Uncanny the  
place is:

Thence upward ascendeth the  
surging of waters,  
Wan to the welkin, when the wind is  
stirring  
The weathers unpleasing, till the air  
groweth gloomy,  
To thee only can I look for  
assistance.

55

And the heavens lower. Now is  
help to be gotten  
From thee and thee only! The abode

thou know'st not,

The dangerous place where thou'rt  
able to meet with

The sin-laden hero: seek if thou  
darest!

For the feud I will fully fee thee  
with money,

60

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

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

[1] For ‘gefrægnod’ (1334), K. and t.B.

suggest ‘gefægnod,’ rendering ‘*rejoicing in her fill.*’ This gives a parallel to ‘æse wlanc’ (1333).

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

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

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

**XXII.**



# **BEOWULF SEEKS GRENDEL'S MOTHER.**

Beowulf answered, Ecgtheow's  
son:

Beowulf exhorts the old king to  
arouse himself for action.

“Grieve not, O wise one! for each it  
is better,

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.

25

The son of the athelings then went  
o'er the stony,  
Declivitous cliffs, the close-  
covered passes,  
Narrow passages, paths  
unfrequented,  
Nesses abrupt, nicker-haunts many;

One of a few of wise-mooded  
heroes,

30

He onward advanced to view the  
surroundings,

Till he found unawares woods of  
the mountain

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

The water stood under, welling and  
gory.

'Twas irksome in spirit to all of the  
Danemen,

35

Friends of the Scyldings, to many a  
liegeman

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

Sad to be suffered, a sorrow unlittle  
To each of the earlmen, when to  
Æschere's head they

Came on the cliff. The current was  
seething

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

40

The horn anon sang the battle-song  
ready.

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

The water is filled with serpents and  
sea-dragons.

Many a serpent, mere-dragons  
wondrous

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



One of them is killed by Beowulf.  
Hot-mooded, hateful, they heard the  
great clamor,  
The war-trumpet winding. One did  
the Geat-prince  
Sunder from earth-joys, with arrow  
from bowstring,

50

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

The dead beast is a poor swimmer  
Pierced to his vitals; he proved in  
the currents

Less doughty at swimming whom

death had offcarried.

Soon in the waters the wonderful  
swimmer

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

55

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

The liegemen then looked on the  
loath-fashioned stranger.

Beowulf prepares for a struggle with  
the monster.

Beowulf donned then his battle-  
equipments,

Cared little for life; inlaid and most  
ample,

The hand-woven corslet which  
could cover his body,

60

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

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

Not peril his safety; his head was  
protected

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

Trying the eddies, treasure-

emblazoned,

65

Encircled with jewels, as in  
seasons long past

The weapon-smith worked it,  
wondrously made it,

With swine-bodies fashioned it, that  
thenceforward no longer

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

And that was not least of helpers in  
prowess

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

75

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,

80

Exulting in strength, what erst he  
had spoken

Drunken with wine, when the  
weapon he lent to

A sword-hero bolder; himself did

not venture

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

To fame-deeds perform; there he  
forfeited glory,

85

Repute for his strength. Not so with  
the other

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

# 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

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

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

Good over-measure, enjoyed him

while able.

15

And the ancient heirloom Unferth  
permit thou,  
The famed one to have, the heavy-  
sword splendid<sup>1</sup>  
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

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

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

He was able to see the sea at its  
bottom.

Early she found then who fifty of  
winters

25

The course of the currents kept in  
her fury,

Grisly and greedy, that the grim  
one's dominion

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

Some one of men from above was  
exploring.

Forth did she grab them, grappled  
the warrior

With horrible clutches; yet no  
sooner she injured

30

His body unscathed: the burnie out-  
guarded,

That she proved but powerless to

pierce through the armor,

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

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

She grabs him, and bears him to her  
den.

The ring-prince homeward, that he  
after was powerless

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,

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;

The hero throws down all weapons,  
and again trusts to his hand-grip.

He hoped in his strength, his hand-  
grapple sturdy.

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 armor saves his life.

His breast-armor woven bode on  
his shoulder;

It guarded his life, the entrance  
defended

75

'Gainst sword-point and edges.

Ecgtheow's son there

Had fatally journeyed, champion of  
Geatmen,

In the arms of the ocean, had the

armor not given,

Close-woven corslet, comfort and  
succor,

God arranged for his escape.

And had God most holy not  
awarded the victory,

80

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,

and fells the female monster.

Broke through her bone-joints, the  
bill fully pierced her

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

The hand-sword was bloody, the  
hero exulted.

The brand was brilliant, brightly it  
glimmered,

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,

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

When he saw on his rest-place  
weary of conflict

Grendel lying, of life-joys  
bereavèd,

30

As the battle at Heorot erstwhile  
    had scathed him;  
His body far bounded, a blow when  
    he suffered,  
Death having seized him, sword-  
    smiting heavy,  
And he cut off his head then. Early  
    this noticed  
The clever carles who as comrades  
    of Hrothgar  
The waters are gory.

35

Gazed on the sea-deeps, that the



surging wave-currents

Were mightily mingled, the mere-  
flood was gory:

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

Beowulf is given up for dead.

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

The atheling ever, that exulting in  
victory

40

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

Then many concluded the mere-

wolf had killed him.<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

The giant-sword melts.

To see any more. The sword-blade

began then,

The blood having touched it,  
contracting and shriveling  
With battle-icicles; 'twas a  
wonderful marvel

50

That it melted entirely, likest to ice  
when

The Father unbindeth the bond of  
the frost and

Unwindeth the wave-bands, He who  
wieldeth dominion

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

Nor took he of jewels more in the  
dwelling,

55

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

Than the head and the handle  
handsome with jewels;

The brand early melted, burnt was  
the weapon:<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.

It takes four men to carry Grendel's

head on a spear.

Four of them had to carry with labor  
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 ‘þæs,’ which is clearly a gen. of the thing agreed on.

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

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

In v. 1997 ff. this same idiom

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

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

The idiom above treated runs

through A.-S., Old Saxon, and other Teutonic languages, and should be noticed in the lexicons.

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

[3] ‘Cyning-balde’ (1635) is the much-disputed reading of K. and Th. To render this, “*nobly bold*,” “*excellently bold*,” have been suggested. B. would read ‘cyning-holde’ (cf. 290), and render: *Men well-disposed towards the king carried the head, etc.*

‘Cynebealde,’ says t.B., endorsing  
Gr.

# XXV.

# BEOWULF BRINGS HIS TROPHIES.— HROTHGAR'S GRATITUDE.

Beowulf relates his last exploit.

Beowulf spake, offspring of  
Ecgtheow:

“Lo! we blithely have brought thee,  
bairn of Healfdene,  
Prince of the Scyldings, these  
presents from ocean



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

5

I came off alive from this, narrowly  
'scaping:

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

Performed, and the fight had been  
finished quite nearly,

Had God not defended me. I failed  
in the battle

Aught to accomplish, aided by  
Hrunting,

10

Though that weapon was worthy,  
but the Wielder of earth-folk  
God was fighting with me.

Gave me willingly to see on the  
wall a

Heavy old hand-sword hanging in  
splendor

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

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

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,  
Heorot is freed from monsters.  
Thou'lt be able in Heorot careless  
to slumber

With thy throng of heroes and the  
thanes of thy people

Every and each, of greater and  
lesser,

And thou needest not fear for them  
from the selfsame direction

25

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

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

The famous sword is presented to  
Hrothgar.

The gray-haired chieftain, the gold-

fashioned sword-hilt,  
Old-work of giants, was thereupon  
given;  
Since the fall of the fiends, it fell to  
the keeping

30

Of the wielder of Danemen, the  
wonder-smith's labor,  
And the bad-mooded being  
abandoned this world then,  
Opponent of God, victim of murder,  
And also his mother; it went to the  
keeping  
Of the best of the world-kings,

where waters encircle,

35

Who the scot divided in Scylding  
dominion.

Hrothgar 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,

40

They had proved themselves daring:  
that people was loth to  
It had belonged to a race hateful to  
God.

The Lord everlasting, through lash  
of the billows

The Father gave them final requital.  
So in letters of rune on the clasp of  
the handle

Gleaming and golden, 'twas graven  
exactly,

45

Set forth and said, whom that sword

had been made for,

Finest of irons, who first it was  
wrought for,

Wreathed at its handle and gleaming  
with serpents.

The wise one then said (silent they  
all were)

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,

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

A help unto heroes. Heremod  
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

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

70

To the Danes after custom; endured  
he unjoyful

Standing the straits from strife that  
was raging,

Longsome folk-sorrow. Learn then  
from this,

Lay hold of virtue! Though laden  
with winters,

I have sung thee these measures.

'Tis a marvel to tell it,

Hrothgar moralizes.

75

How all-ruling God from greatness  
of spirit

Giveth wisdom to children of men,  
Manor and earlship: all things He  
ruleth.

He often permitteth the mood-  
thought of man of

The illustrious lineage to lean to  
possessions,

80

Allows him earthly delights at his  
manor,

A high-burg of heroes to hold in his

keeping,

Maketh portions of earth-folk hear  
him,

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

He himself is unable to reckon its  
boundaries;

85

He liveth in luxury, little debars  
him,

Nor sickness nor age, no treachery-  
sorrow

Becloudeth his spirit, conflict  
nowhere,

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

Wend as he wisheth; the worse he  
knoweth not,

90

Till arrant arrogance inward  
pervading,

Waxeth and springeth, when the  
warder is sleeping,

The guard of the soul: with sorrows  
encompassed,

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

Who with bow and arrow aimeth in

malice.

[1] Or rather, perhaps, ‘*the inlaid, or damaskeened weapon.*’ Cf. 24 57 and note.



**XXVI.**

# **HROTHGAR MORALIZES.—REST AFTER LABOR.**

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;

Be not over proud: life is fleeting,

and its strength soon wasteth away.  
Beware of arrogance, world-  
famous champion!  
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,  
Sorrow after joy.

30

Came to my manor, grief after  
joyance,  
When Grendel became my constant  
visitor,  
Inveterate hater: I from that malice  
Continually travailed with trouble  
no little.  
Thanks be to God that I gained in  
my lifetime,

35

To the Lord everlasting, to look on  
the gory

Head with mine eyes, after long-  
lasting sorrow!

Go to the bench now, battle-adornèd  
Joy in the feasting: of jewels in  
common

We'll meet with many when  
morning appeareth.”

40

The Geatman was gladsome, ganged  
he immediately

To go to the bench, as the clever one



bade him.

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

Hall-inhabiters, handsomely  
banqueted,

Feasted anew. The night-veil fell  
then

45

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

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

The hoary old Scylding. Hankered  
the Geatman,

Beowulf is fagged, and seeks rest.  
The champion doughty, greatly, to  
rest him:

An earlman early outward did lead  
him,

50

Fagged from his faring, from far-  
country springing,

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

Needs regarded, such as seamen at  
that time

Were bounden to feel. The big-  
hearted rested;

The building up towered, 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>

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

Offspring of Ecglaf, off to bear  
Hrunting,

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's farewell.

Beowulf spake, Ecgtheow's  
offspring:

“We men of the water wish to  
declare now

Fared from far-lands, we're firmly  
determined

To seek King Higelac. Here have  
we fitly

5

Been welcomed and feasted, as  
heart would desire it;

Good was the greeting. If greater  
affection

I am anywise able ever on earth to

Gain at thy hands, ruler of heroes,

Than yet I have done, I shall quickly  
be ready

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,

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

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

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,

Thou hast healed the ancient breach

between our races.

40

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

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:

45

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

50

Kinsman of Healfdene, a dozen of  
jewels,

Bade him safely seek with the

presents

His well-beloved people, early  
returning.

Hrothgar kisses Beowulf, and weeps.  
Then the noble-born king kissed the  
distinguished,

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,

<sup>2</sup>That bold in council they'd meet  
thereafter.

The man was so dear that he failed  
to suppress the

60

Emotions that moved him, but in  
mood-fetters fastened

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

The long-famous hero longeth in  
secret

Deep in his spirit for the dear-  
beloved man

Though not a blood-kinsman.

Beowulf thenceward,

Gold-splendid warrior, walked o'er  
the meadows

65

Exulting in treasure: the sea-going  
vessel

Riding at anchor awaited its owner.

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

Giving liberally is the true proof of  
kingship.

Was frequently referred to: a folk-  
king indeed that

Everyway blameless, till age did  
debar him

70

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

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

[2] S. and B. emend so as to negative the verb ‘meet.’ “Why should Hrothgar weep if he expects to meet Beowulf again?” both these

scholars ask. But the weeping is mentioned before the ‘expectations’: the tears may have been due to many emotions, especially gratitude, struggling for expression.

# XXVIII.

# THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY.—THE TWO QUEENS.

Then the band of very valiant  
retainers  
Came to the current; they were clad  
all in armor,  
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<sup>1</sup>  
vesselward traveled

Welcome to Weders. The wide-  
bosomed craft then

Lay on the sand, laden with armor,  
10

With horses and jewels, the ring-  
stemmed sailer:

The mast uptowered o'er the  
treasure of Hrothgar.

Beowulf gives the guard a handsome  
sword.

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

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

As the heirloom's owner. <sup>2</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,

The Geats see their own land again.

Till they came within sight of the

cliffs of the Geatmen,  
The well-known headlands. The  
wave-goer hastened  
Driven by breezes, stood on the  
shore.

The port-warden is anxiously looking  
for them.

25

Prompt at the ocean, the port-ward  
was ready,  
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

30

Should be able to injure the ocean-  
wood winsome.

Bade he up then take the treasure of  
princes,

Plate-gold and fretwork; not far was  
it thence

To go off in search of the giver of  
jewels:

Hrethel's son Higelac at home there

remaineth,<sup>4</sup>

35

Himself with his comrades close to  
the sea-coast.

The building was splendid, the king  
heroic,

Great in his hall, Hygd very young  
was,

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;

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  
She is a terror to all save her

husband.

45

Dared to adventure to look at the  
woman

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,  
Beowulf and his party seek Higelac.  
Seeking the sea-shore, the sea-  
marches treading,  
The wide-stretching shores. The  
world-candle glimmered,  
The sun from the southward; they  
proceeded then onward,

5

Early arriving where they heard that  
the troop-lord,  
Ongentheow's slayer, excellent,  
youthful

Folk-prince and warrior was  
distributing jewels,  
Close in his castle. The coming of  
Beowulf

Was announced in a message  
quickly to Higelac,

10

That the folk-troop's defender forth  
to the palace

The linden-companion alive was  
advancing,  
Secure from the combat courtward  
a-going.

The building was early inward  
made ready  
For the foot-going guests as the  
good one had ordered.

Beowulf sits by his liegelord.

15

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

25

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

30

Any at all? In agony-billows

My suspense has been great.

I mused upon torture, distrusted the  
journey

Of the beloved liegeman; I long  
time did pray thee

By no means to seek out the  
murderous spirit,

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

35

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

Grendel's kindred have no cause to  
boast.

45

Needeth not boast of that cry-in-the-



morning,

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:

She is betrothed to Ingeld, in order  
to unite the Danes and Heathobards.

Gold-bedecked, youthful, to the  
glad son of Froda

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, þéah séo brýd duge = *often has a treaty been (thus) struck, after a prince had fallen: (but only) a short time is the spear (then) wont to rest, however excellent the bride may be.*

**XXX.**



# **BEOWULF NARRATES HIS ADVENTURES TO HIGELAC.**

“It well may discomfit the prince of  
the Heathobards

And each of the thanemen of earls  
that attend him,

When he goes to the building  
escorting the woman,

That a noble-born Daneman the

knights should be feasting:

5

There gleam on his person the  
leavings of elders

Hard and ring-bright, Heathobards'  
treasure,

While they wielded their arms, till  
they misled to the battle

Their own dear lives and beloved  
companions.

He saith at the banquet who the  
collar beholdeth,

10

An ancient ash-warrior who

earlmen's destruction

Clearly recalleth (cruel his spirit),  
Sadly beginneth sounding the  
youthful

Thane-champion's spirit through the  
thoughts of his bosom,  
War-grief to waken, and this word-  
answer speaketh:

Ingeld is stirred up to break the  
truce.

15

'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!’

25

So he urgeth and mindeth on every  
occasion

With woe-bringing words, till  
waxeth the season

When the woman’s thane for the  
works of his father,

The bill having bitten, blood-gory  
sleepeth,

Fated to perish; the other one

thenceward

30

'Scapeth alive, the land knoweth  
thoroughly.<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,

35

Their part in the treaty not true to

the Danemen,

Their friendship not fast. I further  
shall tell thee

Having made these preliminary  
statements, I will now tell thee of  
Grendel, the monster.

More about Grendel, that thou fully  
mayst hear,

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.

Hondscio fell first

To Hondscio happened a hopeless  
contention,

Death to the doomed one, dead he  
fell foremost,

45

Girded war-champion; to him  
Grendel became then,

To the vassal distinguished, a tooth-



weaponed murderer,

The well-beloved henchman's body  
all swallowed.

Not the earlier off empty of hand  
did

The bloody-toothed murderer,  
mindful of evils,

50

Wish to escape from the gold-  
giver's palace,

But sturdy of strength he strove to  
outdo me,

Hand-ready grappled. A glove was  
suspended

Spacious and wondrous, in art-  
feters fastened,

Which was fashioned entirely by  
touch of the craftman

55

From the dragon's skin by the  
devil's devices:

He down in its depths would do me  
unsadly

One among many, deed-doer raging,  
Though sinless he saw me; not so  
could it happen

When I in my anger upright did  
stand.

60

'Tis too long to recount how  
    requital I furnished  
For every evil to the earlmen's  
    destroyer;

    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:

65

Yet his right-hand guarded his

footstep in Heorot,

And sad-mooded thence to the sea-  
bottom fell he,

Mournful in mind. For the might-  
rush of battle

King Hrothgar lavished gifts upon  
me.

The friend of the Scyldings, with  
gold that was plated,

With ornaments many, much  
requited me,

70

When daylight had dawned, and  
down to the banquet

We had sat us together. There was  
chanting and joyance:

The age-stricken Scylding asked  
many questions

And of old-times related; oft light-  
ringing harp-strings,

Joy-telling wood, were touched by  
the brave one;

75

Now he uttered measures, mourning  
and truthful,

Then the large-hearted land-king a  
legend of wonder

Truthfully told us. Now troubled

with years

The old king is sad over the loss of  
his youthful vigor.

The age-hoary warrior afterward  
began to

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.

Æschere falls a prey to her  
vengeance.

There the spirit of Æschere, agèd  
adviser,

90

Was ready to vanish; nor when morn  
had lightened

Were they anywise suffered to  
consume him with fire,

Folk of the Danemen, the death-  
weakened hero,

Nor the belovèd liegeman to lay on  
the pyre;

She 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,

Might-deeds accomplish; much did  
he promise.

I sought the creature in her den,  
I found then the famous flood-  
current's cruel,  
Horrible depth-warder. A while  
unto us two  
Hand was in common; the currents  
were seething  
With gore that was clotted, and  
Grendel's fierce mother's  
and hewed her head off.

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.

Beowulf gives Hygd the necklace  
that Wealhtheow had given him.  
I am told that to Hygd he proffered  
the necklace,

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,

40

And the lord of the liegemen loth  
was to do him

Mickle of honor, when mead-cups  
were passing;

They fully believed him idle and  
sluggish,

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.

45

The folk-troop's defender bade

fetch to the building

The heirloom of Hrethel,

embellished with gold,

Higelac overwhelms the conqueror  
with gifts.

So the brave one enjoined it; there  
was jewel no richer

In the form of a weapon 'mong

Geats of that era;

In Beowulf's keeping he placed it  
and gave him

50

Seven of thousands, manor and  
lordship.

Common to both was land 'mong  
the people,  
Estate and inherited rights and  
possessions,  
To the second one specially  
spacious dominions,  
To the one who was better. It  
afterward happened

55

In days that followed, befell the  
battle-thanes,  
After 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

The fire-drake.

65

Dragon, to govern, who guarded a  
treasure,

A high-rising stone-cliff, on heath  
that was grayish:

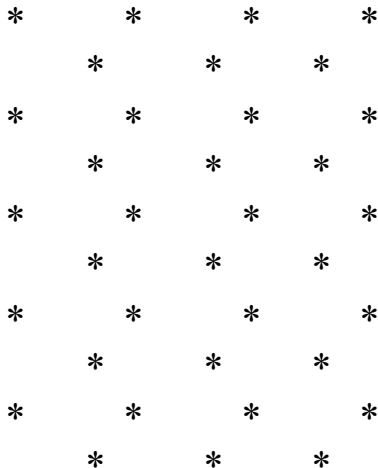
A path 'neath it lay, unknown unto  
mortals.

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.'

**XXXII.**

# THE HOARD AND THE DRAGON.

\* \* \* \*

\* \* \*

He sought of himself who sorely did  
harm him,

But, for need very pressing, the  
servant of one of

The sons of the heroes hate-blows  
evaded,

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,

15

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

20

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, unneth of  
approaching:

The keeper of rings carried within a

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

nobles,

25

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-scather

50

Found the great treasure standing all  
open,

He who flaming and fiery flies to  
the barrows,

Naked war-dragon, nightly escapeth  
Encompassed with fire; men under  
heaven

Widely beheld him. 'Tis said that he  
looks for<sup>4</sup>

55

The hoard in the earth, where old he  
is guarding

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

The dragon meets his match.  
So three-hundred winters the waster  
of peoples  
Held upon earth that excellent  
hoard-hall,  
Till the forementioned earlman  
angered him bitterly:

60

The beat-plated beaker he bare to  
his chieftain  
And fullest remission for all his  
remissness

Begged of his liegeland. 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

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 hoardward 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.

Beowulf hears of the havoc wrought  
by the dragon.

Then straight was the horror to  
Beowulf published,

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:

He fears that Heaven is punishing  
him for some crime.

The wise one weened then that  
wielding his kingdom

'Gainst the ancient commandments,  
he had bitterly angered

20

The Lord everlasting: with lorn  
meditations

His bosom welled inward, as was

nowise his custom.

The fire-spewing dragon fully had  
wasted

The fastness of warriors, the water-  
land outward,

The manor with fire. The folk-ruling  
hero,

25

Prince of the Weders, was planning  
to wreak him.

The warmen's defender bade them  
to make him,

Earlmen's atheling, an excellent  
war-shield

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,

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,

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.

'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. 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

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

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

A guide leads the way, but  
That in the throng was thirteenth of  
heroes,  
That caused the beginning of  
conflict so bitter,  
Captive and wretched, must sad-  
mooded thenceward  
very reluctantly.

Point out the place: he passed then  
unwillingly

20

To the spot where he knew of the

notable cavern,

The cave under earth, not far from  
the ocean,

The anger of eddies, which inward  
was full of

Jewels and wires: a warden  
uncanny,

Warrior weaponed, wardered the  
treasure,

25

Old under earth; no easy possession  
For any of earth-folk access to get  
to.

Then the battle-brave atheling sat on

the naze-edge,

While the gold-friend of Geatmen  
gracious saluted

His fireside-companions: woe was  
his spirit,

30

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

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

Dragging aloof his life from his  
body:

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

Beowulf spake, Ecgtheow's son:

Beowulf's retrospect.

35

“I survived in my youth-days many  
a conflict,

Hours of onset: that all I remember.

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

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

Hrethel the hero-king had me in  
keeping,

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<sup>1</sup>

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

55

A song of sorrow, when his son is  
hanging

For the raven's delight, and aged  
and hoary

He is unable to offer any assistance.

Every morning his offspring's  
departure

Is constant recalled: he cares not to  
wait for

60

The birth of an heir in his borough-  
enclosures,

Since that one through death-pain  
the deeds hath experienced.

He heart-grieved beholds in the  
house of his son the

Wine-building wasted, the wind-  
lodging places

Reaved of their roaring; the riders

are sleeping,

65

The knights in the grave; there's no  
sound of the harp-wood,  
Joy in the yards, as of yore were  
familiar.

[1] 'Gomelum ceorle' (2445).—H. takes these words as referring to Hrethel; but the translator here departs from his editor by understanding the poet to refer to a hypothetical old man, introduced as an illustration of a father's sorrow.

Hrethrel had certainly never

seen a son of his ride on the gallows to feed the crows.

The passage beginning ‘swá bið géomorlic’ seems to be an effort to reach a full simile, ‘as ... so.’ ‘As it is mournful for an old man, etc. ... so the defence of the Weders (2463) bore heart-sorrow, etc.’ The verses 2451 to 2463½ would be parenthetical, the poet’s feelings being so strong as to interrupt the simile. The punctuation of the fourth edition would be better—a comma after ‘galgan’ (2447). The translation may be indicated as follows: (*Just*) *as it is sad for an*

*old man to see his son ride young  
on the gallows when he himself is  
uttering mournful measures, a  
sorrowful song, while his son  
hangs for a comfort to the raven,  
and he, old and infirm, cannot  
render him any kelp—(he is  
constantly reminded, etc., 2451-  
2463)—so the defence of the  
Weders, etc.*

**XXXV.**



**REMINISCENCES**  
*(continued).—*  
**BEOWULF'S LAST  
BATTLE.**

“He seeks then his chamber, singeth  
a woe-song  
One for the other; all too extensive  
Seemed homesteads and plains. So  
the helm of the Weders  
Hrethel grieves for Herebald.

Mindful of Herebald heart-sorrow  
carried,

5

Stirred with emotion, nowise was  
able

To wreak his ruin on the ruthless  
destroyer:

He was unable to follow the  
warrior with hatred,

With deeds that were direful, though  
dear he not held him.

Then pressed by the pang this pain  
occasioned him,

10

He gave up glee, God-light elected;  
He left to his sons, as the man that is  
rich does,  
His land and fortress, when from  
life he departed.

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

25

With edges of irons egged on to  
murder,

Where Ongentheow maketh onset on  
Eofof:

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

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.

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.

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-liegemmen—his last  
salutation:

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

Wist I a way my word-boast to  
    'comply<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

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,  
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,<sup>3</sup>

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.

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.

[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 'comply;

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



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,

<sup>1</sup>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-agèd 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

<sup>2</sup>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.

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;

<sup>1</sup>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,

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

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.

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<sup>1</sup>

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;<sup>2</sup> 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.

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 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,

50

Bright when I'm burned, at the  
brim-current's limit;

As a memory-mark to the men I  
have governed,

Aloft it shall tower on Whale's-

Ness uprising,

That earls of the ocean hereafter  
may call it

Beowulf's barrow, those who barks  
ever-dashing

55

From a distance shall drive o'er the  
darkness of waters."

The hero's last gift

The bold-mooded troop-lord took  
from his neck then

The ring that was golden, gave to  
his liegeman,

The youthful war-hero, his gold-

flashing helmet,

His collar and war-mail, bade him  
well to enjoy them:

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 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

‘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

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<sup>1</sup>

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,

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,—

Surely our lord wasted his armor on  
poltroons.

That he wildly wasted his war-gear  
undoubtedly

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

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.

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

Then he charged that the battle be  
announced at the hedge

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

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

Bearers of battle-shields, both

things expecting,

5

The end of his lifetime and the  
coming again of

The liegelord belovèd. Little  
reserved he

Of news that was known, who the  
ness-cliff did travel,

But he truly discoursed to all that  
could hear him:

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,<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  
    overnight 'complished

That the mail-clad warrior must  
    sink in the battle,

Fell 'mid his folk-troop: no fret-

gems presented

The atheling to earlmen; aye was  
denied us

Merewing's mercy. The men of the  
Swedelands

30

For truce or for truth trust I but  
little;

But widely 'twas known that near  
Ravenswood Ongentheow

Hæthcyn's fall referred to.

Sundered Hæthcyn the Hrethling  
from life-joys,

When for pride overweening the

War-Scylfings first did  
Seek the Geatmen with savage  
intentions.

35

Early did Ohthere's age-laden  
father,

Old and terrible, give blow in  
requital,

Killing the sea-king, the queen-  
mother rescued,

The old one his consort deprived of  
her gold,

Onela's mother and Ohthere's also,

40

And then followed the feud-nursing  
foemen till hardly,  
Reaved of their ruler, they  
Ravenswood entered.  
Then with vast-numbered forces he  
assaulted the remnant,  
Weary with wounds, woe often  
promised  
The livelong night to the sad-  
hearted war-troop:

45

Said he at morning would kill them  
with edges of weapons,  
Some on the gallows for glee to the



fowls.

Aid came after to the anxious-in-  
spirit

At dawn of the day, after Higelac's  
bugle

And trumpet-sound heard they,  
when the good one proceeded

50

And faring followed the flower of  
the troopers.

[1] 'Hige-méðum' (2910) is glossed by H. as dat. plu. (= for the dead). S. proposes 'hige-méðe,' nom. sing. limiting Wigláf; i.e. *W.*, *mood-*

*weary, holds head-watch o'er  
friend and foe.*—B. suggests taking  
the word as dat. inst. plu. of an  
abstract noun in -‘u.’ The  
translation would be substantially  
the same as S.’s.

**XLI.**

# THE MESSENGER'S RETROSPECT.

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

“The blood-stainèd 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<sup>1</sup> 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 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.

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,

Higelac rewards the brothers.

To Eofor and Wulf with wide-  
lavished treasures,

To each of them granted a hundred  
of thousands

50

In land and rings wrought out of  
wire:

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;

To Eofor he also gives his only  
daughter in marriage.

And to Eofor then gave he his one  
only daughter,

The honor of home, as an earnest of  
favor.

55

That's the feud and hatred—as  
ween I 'twill happen—

The anger of earthmen, that earls of  
the Swedemen

Will visit on us, when they hear that  
our leader

Lifeless is lying, he who longtime  
protected

His hoard and kingdom 'gainst  
hating assailers,

60

Who on the fall of the heroes  
defended of yore

The deed-mighty Scyldings,<sup>4</sup> did for  
the troopers

What best did avail them, and  
further moreover

It is time for us to pay the last marks

of respect to our lord.

Hero-deeds 'complished. Now is  
haste most fitting,

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, grossly  
purchased

And ending it all ornament-rings too  
70

Bought with his life; these fire shall  
devour,

Flame shall cover, no earlman shall  
wear

A jewel-memento, nor beautiful  
virgin

Have on her neck rings to adorn her,  
But wretched in spirit bereavèd of  
gold-gems

75

She shall oft with others be exiled  
and banished,



Since the leader of liegemen hath  
    laughter forsaken,  
Mirth and merriment. Hence many a  
    war-spear  
Cold from the morning shall be  
    clutched in the fingers,  
Heaved in the hand, no harp-  
    music's sound shall

80

Waken the warriors, but the wan-  
    coated raven  
Fain over fey ones freely shall  
    gabble,  
Shall say to the eagle how he sped

in the eating,

When, the wolf his companion, he  
plundered the slain.”

So the high-minded hero was  
rehearsing these stories

85

Loathsome to hear; he lied as to few  
of

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

Weirds and of words. All the war-  
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>

100

To rejoice in the air, thereafter  
departing

To visit his den; he in death was  
then fastened,

He would joy in no other earth-  
hollowed caverns.

There stood round about him  
beakers and vessels,

Dishes were lying and dear-valued  
weapons,

105

With iron-rust eaten, as in earth's  
mighty bosom

A thousand of winters there they had

rested:

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,  
110  
Sooth-king of Vict'ries gave whom  
He wished to  
God alone could give access to it.  
6(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

25

Lie where he long was, live in his  
dwelling  
Till the end of the world. Met we a  
destiny  
Hard to endure: the hoard has been  
looked at,  
Been gained very grimly; too  
grievous the fate that<sup>5</sup>



The prince of the people pricked to  
come thither.

30

*I* was therein and all of it looked at,  
The building's equipments, since  
access was given me,  
Not kindly at all entrance permitted  
He tells them of Beowulf's last  
moments.

Within under earth-wall. Hastily  
seized I

And held in my hands a huge-  
weighing burden

35

Of hoard-treasures costly, hither out  
bare them

To my liegelord belovèd: life was  
yet in him,

And consciousness also; the old one  
discoursed then

Much and mournfully, commanded  
to greet you,

Beowulf's dying request.

Bade that remembering the deeds of  
your friend-lord

40

Ye build on the fire-hill of corpses  
a lofty

Burial-barrow, broad and far-  
famous,

As 'mid world-dwelling warriors  
he was widely most honored  
While he reveled in riches. Let us  
rouse us and hasten

Again to see and seek for the  
treasure,

45

The wonder 'neath wall. The way I  
will show you,

That close ye may look at ring-gems  
sufficient

And gold in abundance. Let the bier

with promptness

Fully be fashioned, when forth we  
shall come,

And lift we our lord, then, where  
long he shall tarry,

50

Well-beloved warrior, 'neath the  
Wielder's protection."

Wiglaf charges them to build a  
funeral-pyre.

Then the son of Wihstan bade  
orders be given,

Mood-valiant man, to many of  
heroes,

Holders of homesteads, that they  
 hither from far,

<sup>6</sup> Leaders of liegemen, should look  
 for the good one

55

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

(The wan fire shall wax<sup>7</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

65

Who fared at the front, a fire-  
blazing torch-light

Bare in his hand. No lot then  
decided

Who that hoard should havoc, when  
hero-earls saw it

Lying in the cavern uncared-for  
entirely,

Rusting to ruin: they rued then but  
little

70

That they hastily hence hauled out  
the treasure,

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,

75

A mass unmeasured, the men-leader  
off then,  
The hero hoary, to Whale's-Ness



was carried.

[1] For ‘gehýdde,’ B. suggests ‘gehýðde’: the passage would stand as above except the change of ‘hidden’ (v. 2) to ‘plundered.’ The reference, however, would be to the thief, not to the dragon.

[2] The passage ‘Wundur ... búan’ (3063-3066), M. took to be a question asking whether it was strange that a man should die when his appointed time had come.—B. sees a corruption, and makes emendations introducing the idea that a brave man should not die

from sickness or from old age, but should find death in the performance of some deed of daring.—S. sees an indirect question introduced by ‘hwár’ and dependent upon ‘wundur’: *A secret is it when the hero is to die, etc.*—Why may the two clauses not be parallel, and the whole passage an Old English cry of ‘*How wonderful is death!*’?—S.’s is the best yet offered, if ‘wundor’ means ‘mystery.’

- [3] For ‘strude’ in H.-So., S. suggests ‘stride.’ This would require ‘ravage’ (v. 16) to be changed to ‘tread.’

[4] ‘He cared ... sight of’ (17, 18), S. emends so as to read as follows: *He (Beowulf) had not before seen the favor of the avaricious possessor.*

[5] B. renders: *That which drew the king thither (i.e. the treasure) was granted us, but in such a way that it overcomes us.*

[6] ‘Folc-ágende’ (3114) B. takes as dat. sing. with ‘gódum,’ and refers it to Beowulf; that is, *Should bring fire-wood to the place where the good folk-ruler lay.*

[7] C. proposes to take ‘weaxan’ = L. ‘vescor,’ and translate *devour*. This gives a parallel to ‘fretan’ above.

The parenthesis would be discarded and the passage read: *Now shall the fire consume, the wan-flame devour, the prince of warriors, etc.*



# XLIII.

# THE BURNING OF BEOWULF.

Beowulf's pyre.

The folk of the Geatmen got him  
then ready

A pile on the earth strong for the  
burning,

Behung with helmets, hero-knights'  
targets,

And bright-shining burnies, as he  
begged they should have them;

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,

Mingled with weeping (the wind-



roar subsided)

Till the building of bone it had  
broken to pieces,

Hot in the heart. Heavy in spirit

They mood-sad lamented the men-  
leader's ruin;

And mournful measures the much-  
grieving widow

15

\* \* \* \*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*



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,

Rings and gems are laid in the  
barrow.

All such ornaments as erst in the

treasure

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 hámb** (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 ‘bewyrcau.’

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