
BEOWULF

AN ANGLO-SAXON EPIC POEM

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN LESSLIE HALL (1892)

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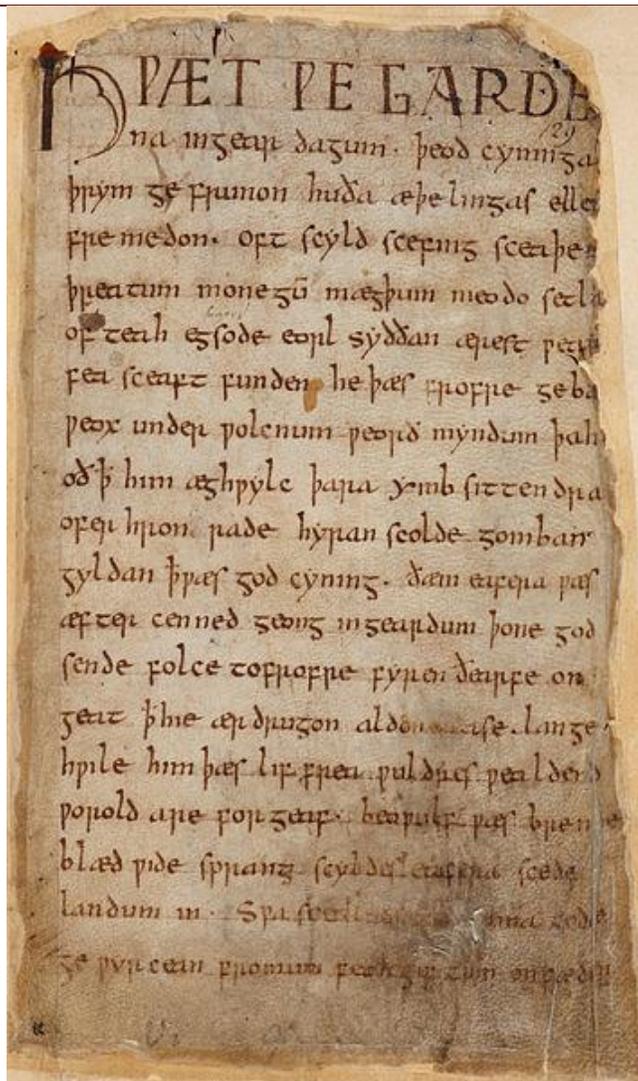


FIGURE 1 THE FIRST FOLIO OF THE HEROIC EPIC POEM BEOWULF, WRITTEN PRIMARILY IN THE WEST SAXON DIALECT OF OLD ENGLISH. PART OF THE COTTON MS VITELLIUS A XV MANUSCRIPT CURRENTLY LOCATED WITHIN THE BRITISH LIBRARY. THIS IS A DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COPY OF THE FOLIO.¹

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THE STORY.²

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 liegelord.

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

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

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

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

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.

² Hall, J. Lesslie (John Lesslie). trans. *Beowulf: An Anglo-Saxon Epic Poem*. Boston: D. C. Heath & co., 1892. Web. 26 May 2014.

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J.L. HALL.

BEOWULF.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SCYLD.

Lo! the Spear-Danes' glory through splendid achievements
The folk-kings' former fame we have heard of,
How princes displayed then their prowess-in-battle.
Oft Scyld the Scefing³ from scathers⁴ in numbers
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,⁵ world-honor gained,
Till all his neighbors o'er sea were compelled to
Bow to his bidding and bring him their tribute:
An excellent atheling!⁶ After was borne him
A son and heir, young in his dwelling,⁷
Whom God-Father sent to solace the people.
He had marked the misery malice had caused them,
That reaved⁸ of their rulers they wretched had erstwhile
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.
So the carle⁹ that is young, by kindnesses rendered
The friends of his father,¹⁰ with fees in abundance
Must be able to earn that when age approacheth

³ "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." (Hall)

⁴ "enemies, foes" from Anglo-Saxon (AS) *sceaþa*

⁵ Sky

⁶ "Prince, nobleman." (Hall)

⁷ A son is born to him, who receives the name of Beowulf—a name afterwards made so famous by the hero of the poem. (Hall)

⁸ Bereft, left without

⁹ Man; the AS is *geong guma*

¹⁰ "The ideal Teutonic king lavishes gifts on his vassals." (Hall)

Eager companions aid him requitingly,
When war assaults him serve him as liegemen:
By praise-worthy actions must honor be got
'Mong all of the races. At the hour that was fated
Scyld 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,
As himself he had bidden, while the friend of the Scyldings
Word-sway wielded, and the well-lovèd land-prince
Long did rule them. The ring-stemmèd vessel,
Bark of the atheling, lay there at anchor,
Icy in glimmer and eager for sailing;
The belovèd leader laid they down there,
Giver of rings, on the breast of the vessel,
The famed by the mainmast. A many of jewels,
Of fretted embossings, from far-lands brought over,
Was placed near at hand then; and heard I not ever
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.
And favors no fewer they furnished him soothly,
Excellent folk-gems, than others had given him
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
High o'er his head, let the holm-currents bear him,
Seaward consigned him: sad was their spirit,
Their mood very mournful. Men are not able
Soothly to tell us, they in halls who reside,

Heroes under heaven, to what haven he hied.

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

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
Great-minded Healfdene; the Danes in his lifetime
He graciously governed, grim-mooded, agèd.
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,
The well-beloved bedmate of the War-Scylfing leader.
Then glory in battle to Hrothgar was given,
Waxing of war-fame, that willingly kinsmen
Obeyed his bidding, till the boys grew to manhood,
A numerous band. It burned in his spirit
To urge his folk to found a great building,
A mead-hall¹¹ grander than men of the era
Ever had heard of, and in it to share
With young and old all of the blessings
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,

¹¹ A great hall where Hrothgar and his retainers can feast.

The greatest of hall-buildings; Heorot¹² he named it
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:
It battle-waves bided, the blasting fire-demon;
Ere long then from hottest hatred must sword-wrath
Arise for a woman's husband and father.
Then the mighty war-spirit endured for a season,
Bore it bitterly, he who bided in darkness,¹³
That light-hearted laughter loud in the building
Greeted him daily; there was dulcet harp-music,
Clear song of the singer. He said that was able
To tell from of old earthmen's beginnings,
That Father Almighty earth had created,
The winsome wold¹⁴ 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
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,¹⁵

¹² "That is, "The Hart," or "Stag," so called from decorations in the gables that resembled the antlers of a deer. This hall has been carefully described in a pamphlet by Heyne. The building was rectangular, with opposite doors -- mainly west and east -- and a hearth in the middle of the single room. A row of pillars down each side, at some distance from the walls, made a space which was raised a little above the main floor, and was furnished with two rows of seats. On one side, usually south, was the high-seat midway between the doors. Opposite this, on the other raised space, was another seat of honor. At the banquet soon to be described, Hrothgar sat in the south or chief high-seat, and Beowulf opposite to him. The scene for a flying (see below, v.499) was thus very effectively set. Planks on trestles -- the "board" of later English literature -- formed the tables just in front of the long rows of seats, and were taken away after banquets, when the retainers were ready to stretch themselves out for sleep on the benches." (Gummere, F. B. *Epic and Saga: Beowulf; The Song of Roland; The Destruction of Dá Derga's Hostel; The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs*. New York: P.F. Collier, 1910. Web. 26 May 2014)

¹³ Grendel

¹⁴ *wlítebeorhtne wang*, beautiful land

¹⁵ joy

The warriors abided, till a certain one gan¹⁶ to
Dog them with deeds of direfullest malice,
A foe in the hall-building: this horrible stranger¹⁷
Was Grendel entitled, the march-stepper famous
Who 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 him¹⁸ and branded. For that bitter murder,
The killing of Abel, all-ruling Father
The kindred of Cain crushed with His vengeance;¹⁹
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.²⁰

GRENDDEL THE MURDERER.

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
Asleep after supper; sorrow the heroes,
Misery knew not. The monster of evil
Greedy and cruel tarried but little,
Fell and frantic, and forced from their slumbers
Thirty of thanemen; thence he departed
Leaping and laughing, his lair to return to,

¹⁶ began

¹⁷ Alternately, "fiend from hell" from AS *feond on helle*.

¹⁸ Cain, brother of Abel

¹⁹ Cain was regarded as the father of all monsters.

²⁰ Justice; God is here seen as the origin and giver of all Justice.

With surfeit²¹ of slaughter sallying homeward.
In the dusk of the dawning, as the day was just breaking,
Was Grendel's prowess revealed to the warriors:
Then, his meal-taking finished, a moan was uplifted,
Morning-cry mighty. The man-ruler famous,
The long-worthy atheling,²² sat very woful,
Suffered great sorrow, sighed for his liegemen,²³
When they had seen the track of the hateful pursuer,
The spirit accursèd: too crushing that sorrow,
Too loathsome and lasting. Not longer he tarried,
But one night after continued his slaughter
Shameless and shocking, shrinking but little
From malice and murder; they mastered him fully.
He was easy to find then who elsewhere looked for
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.
So ruled he²⁴ and strongly strove against justice
Lone against all men, till empty uptowered
The choicest of houses.²⁵ Long was the season:
Twelve-winters' time torture suffered
The friend of the Scyldings, every affliction,
Endless agony; hence it after became
Certainly known to the children of men
Sadly in measures, that long against Hrothgar

²¹ Excess, surplus

²² prince

²³ Retainers, warriors serving under him

²⁴ Grendel

²⁵ "until idle was standing / The best of hall-houses" (William Morris and A. J. Wyatt, trans. *The Tale of Beowulf Sometime King of the Folk of the Weder Geats*. London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1904. Accessed May 26, 2014.)

Grendel struggled:—his grudges he cherished,
Murderous malice, many a winter,
Strife unremitting, and peacefully wished he
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;
The monster of evil fiercely did harass,
The ill-planning death-shade, both elder and younger,
Trapping and tricking them. He trod every night then
The mist-covered moor-fens; men do not know where
Witches and wizards wander and ramble.
So the foe of mankind many of evils
Grievous injuries, often accomplished,
Horrible hermit; Heort he frequented,
Gem-bedecked palace, when night-shades had fallen
(Since God did oppose him, not the throne could he touch,
The light-flashing jewel, love of Him knew not).²⁶
'Twas a fearful affliction to the friend of the Scyldings
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.
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
In innermost spirit, God²⁷ they knew not,

²⁶ "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. (4) Nor had he any desire to do so." (Hall)

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!²⁸

BEOWULF GOES TO HROTHGAR'S ASSISTANCE. (SUMMARY AND EXCERPT)²⁹

- Hrothgar sees no way of escape from the persecutions of Grendel.
- Beowulf, the Geat, hero of the poem, hears of Hrothgar's sorrow, and resolves to go to his assistance.
- With fourteen carefully chosen companions, he sets out for Dane-land.
- The vessel sails like a bird.
- In twenty four hours they reach the shores of Hrothgar's dominions.
- They are hailed and challenged by the Danish coast guard who is struck by Beowulf's appearance.

“Never a greater one
Of earls o'er the earth have I had a sight of
Than is one of your number, a hero in armor;
No low-ranking fellow³⁰ 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

And farther fare, I fully must know now
What race ye belong to. Ye far-away dwellers,
Sea-faring sailors, my simple opinion

²⁷ The Christian god.

²⁸ “Woe for that man / who in harm and hatred hales his soul / to fiery embraces; -- nor favor nor change/ awaits he ever. But well for him / that after death-day may draw to his Lord, /and friendship find in the Father's arms!” (Gummere)

²⁹N.b. All summaries, excerpts, and headings are from Hall.

³⁰ “*Seld-guma*’ is variously rendered: (1) housecarle; (2) home-stayer; (3) common man. Dr. H. Wood suggests a man-at-arms in another’s house.” (Hall)

Hear ye and hearken: haste is most fitting

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

THE GEATS REACH HEOROT. (SUMMARY)

- Beowulf courteously replies.
 - We are Geats.
 - My father Ecgtheow was well-known in his day.
 - Our intentions towards King Hrothgar are of the kindest.
 - Is it true that a monster is slaying Danish heroes?
 - I can help your king to free himself from this horrible creature.
- The coast-guard reminds Beowulf that it is easier to say than to do.
 - I am satisfied of your good intentions, and shall lead you to the palace.
 - Your boat shall be well cared for during your stay here.
- He again compliments Beowulf.
- The coast-guard leads them to Heort.
- The coast-guard, having discharged his duty, bids them God-speed.

BEOWULF INTRODUCES HIMSELF AT THE PALACE. (SUMMARY/EXCERPT)

- The Geats 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;
The lances stood up then, all in a cluster,
The arms of the seamen, ashen-shafts mounted
With edges of iron: the armor-clad troopers
Were decked with weapons..”
- A Danish hero asks them whence and why they are come.
- He expresses no little admiration for the strangers.
- Beowulf replies.

- We are Higelac's table-companions, and bear an important commission to your prince.
- Wulfgar, the thane, says that he will go and ask Hrothgar whether he will see the strangers.
- He thereupon urges his liegelord to receive the visitors courteously.
- Hrothgar, too, is struck with Beowulf's appearance.

HROTHGAR AND BEOWULF. (SUMMARY/EXCERPT)

- Hrothgar remembers Beowulf as a youth, and also remembers his father.
 - Beowulf is reported to have the strength of thirty men.
 - God hath sent him to our rescue.
- Wulfgar invites the strangers in.
- Beowulf salutes Hrothgar, and then proceeds to boast of his youthful achievements.

Beowulf spake (his burnie did glisten,
 His armor seamed over by the art of the craftsman):
 "Hail thou, Hrothgar! I am Higelac's kinsman
 And vassal forsooth; many a wonder
 I dared as a stripling.³¹ The doings of Grendel,
 In far-off fatherland I fully did know of:
 Sea-farers tell us, this hall-building standeth,
 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,
 Folk-leader Hrothgar; fully they knew of
 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 I had bound,
 The giant-race wasted, in the waters destroying
 The nickers³² by night, bore numberless sorrows,
 The Weders avenged (woes had they suffered)
 Enemies ravaged; alone now with Grendel

³¹ Youth

³² Sea monster, water demon from AS *nicor* (*niceras nihtes*, the water-demons at night).

I shall manage the matter, with the monster of evil,
The giant, decide it. Thee I would therefore
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,
This brave-mooded war-band, purify Heorot.
I have heard on inquiry, the horrible creature
From veriest rashness recks not for weapons;
I this do scorn then, so be Higelac gracious,
My liegelord beloved, lenient of spirit,
To bear a blade or a broad-fashioned target,
A shield to the onset; only with hand-grip
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.
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 them, as of yore he did often
The best of the Hrethmen! Thou needest not trouble
A head-watch to give me;³³ he will have me dripping
And dreary with gore, if death overtake me,
Will bear me off bleeding, biting and mouthing me,
The hermit will eat me, heedless of pity,
Marking the moor-fens; no more wilt thou need then
Find me my food. If I fall in the battle,
Send to Higelac the armor that serveth

³³ "That is, cover it as with a face-cloth. "There will be no need of funeral rites." (Gummere); "Thorpe 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." (Hall)

To shield my bosom, the best of equipments,
Richest of ring-mails; 'tis the relic of Hrethla,
The work of Wayland. Goes Weird³⁴ as she must go!"

HROTHGAR AND BEOWULF.—CONTINUED. (SUMMARY)

- Hrothgar responds.
 - Reminiscences of Beowulf's father, Ecgtheow.
 - Hrothgar recounts to Beowulf the horrors of Grendel's persecutions.
 - My thanes have made many boasts, but have not executed them.
 - Sit down to the feast, and give us comfort.
- A bench is made ready for Beowulf and his party.
- The scop³⁵ sings

UNFERTH TAUNTS BEOWULF.

Unferth spoke up, Ecglaf his son,
Who sat at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings,
Opened the jousting (the arrival of Beowulf,
Sea-farer doughty, gave sorrow to Unferth
And greatest chagrin, too, for granted he never
That any man else on earth should attain to,
Gain under heaven, more glory than he):
"Art thou that Beowulf with Breca did struggle,
On the wide sea-currents at swimming contended,
Where to humor your pride the ocean ye tried,
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,

³⁴ Fate.

³⁵ Court musician

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,
In strength excelled thee. Then early at morning
On the Heathoremes' shore the holm-currents tossed him,
Sought he thenceward the home of his fathers,
Beloved of his liegemen, the land of the Brondings,
The peace-castle pleasant, where a people he wielded,
Had borough and jewels. The pledge that he made thee
The son of Beanstan hath soothly accomplished.
Then I ween thou wilt find thee less fortunate issue,
Though ever triumphant in onset of battle,
A grim grappling, if Grendel thou darest
For the space of a night near-by to wait for!"
Beowulf answered, offspring of Ecgtheow:
"My good friend Unferth, sure freely and wildly,
Thou fuddled with beer of Breca hast spoken,
Hast told of his journey! A fact I allege it,
That greater strength in the waters I had then,
Ills in the ocean, than any man else had.
We made agreement as the merest of striplings
Promised each other (both of us then were
Younkers in years)³⁶ in the that we yet would adventure
Out on the ocean; it all we accomplished.
While swimming the sea-floods, sword-blade unscabbarded
Boldly we brandished, our bodies expected
To shield from the sharks. He sure was unable
To swim on the waters further than I could,
More swift on the waves, nor would I from him go.

³⁶ In the days of our youth

Then we two companions stayed in the ocean
Five nights together, till the currents did part us,
The weltering waters, weathers the bleakest,
And nethermost night, and the north-wind whistled
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,
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.

BEOWULF SILENCES UNFERTH.—GLEE IS HIGH. (SUMMARY/EXCERPT)

“So ill-meaning enemies often did cause me
Sorrow the sorest. I served them, in quittance,
With my dear-lovèd sword, as in sooth it was fitting;
They missed the pleasure of feasting abundantly,
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
No longer thereafter were hindered from sailing
The foam-dashing currents. Came a light from the east,
God's beautiful beacon; the billows subsided,
That well I could see the nesses projecting,

The blustering crags. Weird³⁷ often saveth
 The undoomed hero if doughty his valor!
 But me did it fortune to fell with my weapon
 Nine of the nickers.³⁸ Of night-struggle harder
 'Neath dome of the heaven heard I but rarely,
 Nor of wight more woful in the waves of the ocean;
 Yet I 'scaped with my life the grip of the monsters,
 Weary from travel. Then the waters bare me
 To the land of the Finns,³⁹ the flood with the current,
 The weltering waves. Not a word hath been told me
 Of deeds so daring done by thee, Unferth,
 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;
 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,
 The direful demon, done to thy liegelord,
 Harrying in Heorot, if thy heart were as sturdy,
 Thy mood as ferocious as thou dost describe them.
 He hath found out fully that the fierce-burning hatred,
 The edge-battle eager, of all of your kindred,
 Of the Victory-Scyldings, need little dismay him:
 Oaths he exacteth, not any he spares

³⁷ Fortune

³⁸ Sea demons

³⁹ Finalnd

Of the folk of the Danemen, but fighteth with pleasure,
Killeth and feasteth, no contest expecteth
From Spear-Danish people. But the prowess and valor
Of the earls of the Geatmen early shall venture
To give him a grapple. He shall go who is able
Bravely to banquet, when the bright-light of morning
Which the second day bringeth, the sun in its ether-robcs,
O'er children of men shines from the southward!"

- Hrothgar's spirits are revived.
- The old king trusts Beowulf. The heroes are joyful.
- Queen Wealhtheow plays the hostess.
- She offers the cup to her husband first.
- She gives presents to the heroes.
- Then she offers the cup to Beowulf, thanking God that aid has come.
- Beowulf states to the queen the object of his visit.
 - I determined to do or die.
 - Glee is high.
- Hrothgar retires, leaving Beowulf in charge of the hall.

ALL SLEEP SAVE ONE.

Then Hrothgar departed, his earl-throng attending him,
Folk-lord of Scyldings, forth from the building;
The war-chieftain wished then Wealhtheow to look for,
The queen for a bedmate. To keep away Grendel
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.
His armor of iron off him he did then,
His helmet from his head, to his henchman committed
His chased-handled chain-sword, choicest of weapons,
And bade him bide with his battle-equipments.

The good one then uttered words of defiance,
Beowulf Geatman, ere his bed he upmounted:
“I hold me no meaner in matters of prowess,
In warlike achievements, than Grendel does himself;
Hence I seek not with sword-edge to sooth him to slumber,
Of life to bereave him, though well I am able.
No battle-skill has he, that blows he should strike me,
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
The glory apportion, God ever-holy,
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;
And many a martial mere-thane⁴⁰ attending
Sank to his slumber. Seemed it unlikely
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,
Had recently ravished, of the race of the Scyldings
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,
By the might of himself; the truth is established
That God Almighty hath governed for ages
Kindreds and nations. A night very lurid

⁴⁰ “Brave sea warrior” from AS *snelllic saerinc*

The trav'ler-at-twilight⁴¹ came tramping and striding.
The warriors were sleeping who should watch the horned-building,
One only excepted. 'Mid earthmen 'twas 'stablished,
Th' implacable foeman was powerless to hurl them
To the land of shadows, if the Lord were unwilling;
But serving as warder, in terror to foemen,
He angrily bided the issue of battle.

GRENDEL AND BEOWULF.

'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 went under welkin where well he knew of
The wine-joyous building, brilliant with plating,
Gold-hall of earthmen. Not the earliest occasion
He the home and manor of Hrothgar had sought:
Ne'er found he in life-days later nor earlier
Hardier hero, hall-thanes more sturdy!
Then came to the building the warrior marching,
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—
Open the entrance. Early thereafter
The foeman trod the shining hall-pavement,
Strode he angrily; from the eyes of him glimmered
A lustre unlovely likest to fire.
He beheld in the hall the heroes in numbers,
A circle of kinsmen sleeping together,

⁴¹ Grendel

A throng of thanemen: then his thoughts were exultant,
He minded to sunder from each of the thanemen
The life from his body, horrible demon,
Ere morning came, since fate had allowed him
The prospect of plenty. Providence willed not
To permit him any more of men under heaven
To eat in the night-time. Higelac's kinsman
Great sorrow endured how the dire-mooded creature
In unlooked-for assaults were likely to bear him.
No thought had the monster of deferring the matter,
But on earliest occasion he quickly laid hold of
A soldier asleep, suddenly tore him,
Bit his bone-ribs, the blood drank in currents,
Swallowed in mouthfuls: he soon had the dead man's
Feet and hands, too, eaten entirely.
Nearer he strode then, the stout-hearted warrior
Snatched as he slumbered, seizing with hand-grip,
Forward the foeman foined with his hand;
Caught he quickly the cunning deviser,
On his elbow he rested. This early discovered
The master of malice, that in middle-earth's⁴² regions,
'Neath the whole of the heavens, no hand-grapple greater
In any man else had he ever encountered:
Fearful in spirit, faint-mooded waxed he,
Not off could betake him; death he was pondering,
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

⁴² "Middle earth (AS *middangeard*) can mean either the world as the center of the universe midway between heaven and hell or the land lying between the oceans." (Friedrich Klaeber, ed. *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* [Lexington: D. C. Heath and Co., 1950] 375.)

Of Higelac minded his speech of the evening,
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,
To fly to the fen-moors; he fully was ware of
The strength of his grapple in the grip of the foeman.
'Twas an ill-taken journey that the injury-bringing,
Harrying harmer to Heorot wandered:
The palace re-echoed; to all of the Danemen,
Dwellers in castles, to each of the bold ones,
Earlmen, was terror. Angry they both were,
Archwarders raging. Rattled the building;
'Twas a marvellous wonder that the wine-hall withstood then
The bold-in-battle, bent not to earthward,
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.
The Scylding wise men weened ne'er before
That by might and main-strength a man under heaven
Might break it in pieces, bone-decked, resplendent,
Crush it by cunning, unless clutch of the fire
In smoke should consume it. The sound mounted upward
Novel enough; on the North Danes fastened
A terror of anguish, on all of the men there
Who heard from the wall the weeping and plaining,
The song of defeat from the foeman of heaven,
Heard him hymns of horror howl, and his sorrow

Hell-bound bewailing. He held him too firmly
Who was strongest of main-strength of men of that era.

GRENDEL IS VANQUISHED.

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
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.
His death at that time must prove to be wretched,
And the far-away spirit widely should journey
Into enemies' power. This plainly he saw then
Who with mirth of mood malice no little
Had wrought in the past on the race of the earthmen
(To God he was hostile), that his body would fail him,
But Higelac's hardy henchman and kinsman
Held him by the hand; hateful to other
Was each one if living. A body-wound suffered
The direful demon, damage incurable
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
Unwinsome and woful; he wist the more fully
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,
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,
The craft-begot evil they erstwhile had suffered
And were forced to endure from crushing oppression,
Their manifold misery. 'Twas a manifest token,
When the hero-in-battle the hand suspended,
The arm and the shoulder (there was all of the claw
Of Grendel together) 'neath great-stretching hall-roof.

REJOICING OF THE DANES. (SUMMARY/EXCERPT)

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

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;

- Beowulf is the hero of the hour.
- He is regarded as a probable successor to Hrothgar.
- But no word is uttered to derogate from the old king
- The scop sings the deeds of heroes.
 - He sings in alliterative measures of Beowulf's prowess.
 - Sigemund was widely famed.
 - Heremod, an unfortunate Danish king, is introduced by way of contrast.

- Unlike Sigemund and Beowulf, Heremod was a burden to his people.
- Beowulf is an honor to his race.
- The story is resumed.

HROTHGAR'S GRATITUDE.

- Hrothgar gives thanks for the overthrow of the monster.
 - I had given up all hope, when this brave liegeman came to our aid.
 - If his mother yet liveth, well may she thank God for this son.
 - 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
 Of earth-joys any I ever can give thee.
 Full often for lesser service I've given
 Hero less hardy hoard-treasure precious,
 To a weaker in war-strife. By works of distinction
 Thou hast gained for thyself now that thy glory shall flourish
 Forever and ever. The All-Ruler quite thee
 With good from His hand as He hitherto did thee!"

- Beowulf replies: I was most happy to render thee this service.
 - I could not keep the monster from escaping, as God did not will that I should.
 - He left his hand and arm behind.
 - God will give him his deserts.
- Unferth has nothing more to say, for Beowulf's actions speak louder than words.
- No sword will harm the monster.

HROTHGAR LAVISHES GIFTS UPON HIS DELIVERER.

- Heorot is adorned with hands.
- 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
 Whole and uninjured when the horrible creature
 Outlawed for evil off had betaken him,
 Hopeless of living.

- Hrothgar goes to the banquet.

- Hrothgar's nephew, Hrothulf, is present.
- Hrothgar lavishes gifts upon Beowulf.

Then the offspring of Healfdene offered to Beowulf
 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
 He needed not blush for in battle-men's presence.
 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
 Braided with wires, with bosses was furnished,
 That swords-for-the-battle fight-hardened might fail
 Boldly to harm him, when the hero proceeded
 Forth against foemen. The defender of earls then
 Commanded that eight steeds with bridles
 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;
 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,
 Hoard-ward of heroes, with horses and jewels
 War-storms requited, that none e'er condemneth
 Who willeth to tell truth with full justice.

BANQUET (CONTINUED).—THE SCOP'S SONG OF FINN AND HNÆF. (SUMMARY / EXCERPT)

- Each of Beowulf's companions receives a costly gift.
- The warrior killed by Grendel is to be paid for in gold.
- Hrothgar's scop recalls events in the reign of his lord's father. **[The Finn Episode]**
 - Hnæf, the Danish general, is treacherously attacked while staying at Finn's castle.
 - Queen Hildeburg is not only wife of Finn, but a kinswoman of the murdered Hnæf.
 - Finn's force is almost exterminated.
 - Hengest succeeds Hnæf as Danish general.
 - Compact between the Frisians and the Danes.
 - Equality of gifts agreed on.
 - No one shall refer to old grudges.
 - Danish warriors are burned on a funeral-pyre.
 - 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,

In measures lamented; upmounted the hero.

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,

Greediest of spirits, whom war had offcarried

From both of the peoples; their bravest were fallen.

THE FINN EPISODE (CONTINUED).—THE BANQUET CONTINUES. (SUMMARY / EXCERPT)

- Finn episode continued:
 - The survivors go to Friesland, the home of Finn.
 - Hengest remains there all winter, unable to get away.
 - He devises schemes of vengeance.
 - Guthlaf and Oslaf revenge Hnæf's slaughter.
 - Finn is slain.
 - The jewels of Finn, and his queen are carried away by the Danes.
- The lay is concluded, and the main story is resumed.
- Wine bearers offer "wine from wonder-vats".
- Queen Wealhtheow greets Hrothgar, as he sits beside Hrothulf, his nephew.
 - Be generous to the Geats.
 - Have as much joy as possible in thy hall, once more purified.
 - I know that Hrothulf will prove faithful if he survive thee.

BEOWULF RECEIVES FURTHER HONOR.

- More gifts are offered Beowulf.

- A famous necklace is referred to, in comparison with the gems presented to Beowulf.
- Queen Wealhtheow magnifies Beowulf's achievements.
 - May gifts never fail thee.
- They little know of the sorrow in store for them.
- A doomed thane is there with them.
- They were always ready for battle.

'Twas the wont of that people
 To constantly keep them equipped for the battle,
 At home or marching—in either condition—
 At seasons just such as necessity ordered
 As best for their ruler; that people was worthy.

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 the gold-bedecked palace,
 Ill-deeds performing, till his end overtook him,
 Death for his sins. 'Twas seen very clearly,
 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,

 Who was held to inhabit the horrible waters,
 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,
 Lived in the desert. Thence demons unnumbered
 Fate-sent awoke; one of them Grendel,
 Sword-cursèd, hateful, who at Heorot met with
 A man that was watching, waiting the struggle,
 Where a horrid one held him with hand-grapple sturdy;

Nathless he minded the might of his body,
The glorious gift God had allowed him,
And folk-ruling Father's favor relied on,
His help and His comfort: so he conquered the foeman,
The hell-spirit humbled: he unhappy departed then,
Reaved of his joyance, journeying to death-haunts,
Foeman of man. His mother moreover
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
Where the Armor-Dane earlmen all through the building
Were lying in slumber. Soon there became then
Return to the nobles, when the mother of Grendel
Entered the folk-hall; the fear was less grievous
By even so much as the vigor of maidens,
War-strength of women, by warrior is reckoned,
When well-carved weapon, worked with the hammer,
Blade very bloody, brave with its edges,
Strikes down the boar-sign that stands on the helmet.
Then the hard-edged weapon was heaved in the building,
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;
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,
A broadly-famed battle-knight. Beowulf was absent,

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; grief was renewed then
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,
His dearest one gone. Quick from a room was
Beowulf brought, brave and triumphant.
As day was dawning in the dusk of the morning,
Went then that earlman, champion noble,
Came with comrades, where the clever one bided
Whether God all gracious would grant him a respite
After the woe he had suffered. The war-worthy hero
With a troop of retainers trod then the pavement
(The hall-building groaned), till he greeted the wise one,
The earl of the Ingwins; asked if the night had
Fully refreshed him, as fain he would have it.

HROTHGAR'S ACCOUNT OF THE MONSTERS.

- Hrothgar laments the death of Æschere, his shoulder-companion.
 - He was my ideal hero.
 - This horrible creature came to avenge Grendel's death.
 - I have heard my vassals speak of these two uncanny monsters who lived in the moors.
 - They inhabit the most desolate and horrible places.

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,
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,
A firm-rooted forest, the floods overshadow.
There ever at night one an ill-meaning portent
A fire-flood may see; 'mong children of men
None liveth so wise that wot of the bottom;

- Even the hounded deer will not seek refuge in these uncanny regions.
- To thee only can I look for assistance.

BEOWULF SEEKS GRENDEL'S MOTHER.

Beowulf answered, Ecgtheow's son:

"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
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!
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!"
Then up sprang the old one, the All-Wielder thanked he,
Ruler Almighty, that the man had outspoken.
Then for Hrothgar a war-horse was decked with a bridle,
Curly-maned courser. The clever folk-leader
Stately proceeded: stepped then an earl-troop
Of linden-wood bearers. Her footprints were seen then

Widely in wood-paths, her way o'er the bottoms,
Where she faraway fared o'er fen-country murky,
Bore away breathless the best of retainers
Who pondered with Hrothgar the welfare of country.
The son of the athelings then went o'er the stony,
Declivitous cliffs, the close-covered passes,
Narrow passages, paths unfrequented,
Nesses abrupt, nicker-haunts many;
One of a few of wise-mooded heroes,
He onward advanced to view the surroundings,
Till he found unawares woods of the mountain
O'er hoar-stones hanging, holt-wood unjoyful;
The water stood under, welling and gory.
'Twas irksome in spirit to all of the Danemen,
Friends of the Scyldings, to many a liegeman
Sad to be suffered, a sorrow unlittle
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).
The horn anon sang the battle-song ready.
The troop were all seated; they saw 'long the water then
Many a serpent, mere-dragons⁴³ wondrous
Trying the waters, nickers⁴⁴ a-lying
On the cliffs of the nesses, which at noonday full often
Go on the sea-deeps their sorrowful journey,
Wild-beasts and wormkind; away then they hastened
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,

⁴³ Sea dragons

⁴⁴ Sea demons

From his sea-struggle tore him, that the trusty war-missile
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,
Pressed in the battle and pulled to the cliff-edge;
The liegemen then looked on the loath-fashioned stranger.
Beowulf donned then his battle-equipments,
Cared little for life; inlaid and most ample,
The hand-woven corslet which could cover his body,
Must the wave-deeps explore, that war might be powerless
To harm the great hero, and the hating one's grasp might
Not peril his safety; his head was protected
By the light-flashing helmet that should mix with the bottoms,
Trying the eddies, treasure-emblazoned,
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
That Hrothgar's spokesman had lent him when straitened;
And the hilted hand-sword was Hrunting entitled,
Old and most excellent 'mong all of the treasures;
Its blade was of iron, blotted with poison,
Hardened with gore; it failed not in battle
Any hero under heaven in hand who it brandished,
Who ventured to take the terrible journeys,
The battle-field sought; not the earliest occasion
That deeds of daring 'twas destined to 'complish.
Ecglaf's kinsman minded not soothly,
Exulting in strength, what erst he had spoken

Drunken with wine, when the weapon he lent to
A sword-hero bolder; himself did not venture
'Neath the strife of the currents his life to endanger,
To fame-deeds perform; there he forfeited glory,
Repute for his strength. Not so with the other
When he clad in his corslet had equipped him for battle.

BEOWULF'S FIGHT WITH GRENDEL'S MOTHER.

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,
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 beloved,
Send unto Higelac the high-valued jewels
Thou to me hast allotted. The lord of the Geatmen
May perceive from the gold, the Hrethling may see it
When he looks on the jewels, that a gem-giver found I
Good over-measure, enjoyed him while able.
And the ancient heirloom Unferth permit thou,
The famed one to have, the heavy-sword splendid
The hard-edgèd weapon; with Hrunting to aid me,
I shall gain me glory, or grim-death shall take me."
The atheling of Geatmen uttered these words and
Heroic did hasten, not any rejoinder
Was willing to wait for; the wave-current swallowed
The doughty-in-battle. Then a day's-length elapsed ere
He was able to see the sea at its bottom.

Early she found then who fifty of winters
The course of the currents kept in her fury,
Grisly and greedy, that the grim one's dominion
Some one of men from above was exploring.
Forth did she grab them, grappled the warrior
With horrible clutches; yet no sooner she injured
His body unscathed: the burnie out-guarded,
That she proved but powerless to pierce through the armor,
The limb-mail locked, with loath-grabbing fingers.
The sea-wolf bare then, when bottomward came she,
The ring-prince homeward, that he after was powerless
(He had daring to do it) to deal with his weapons,
But many a mere-beast tormented him swimming,
Flood-beasts no few with fierce-biting tusks did
Break through his burnie, the brave one pursued they.
The earl then discovered he was down in some cavern
Where no water whatever anyway 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,
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 would not bite, her life would not injure,
But the falchion failed the folk-prince when straitened:
Erst had it often onsets encountered,
Oft cloven the helmet, the fated one's armor:
'Twas the first time that ever the excellent jewel
Had failed of its fame. Firm-mooded after,

Not heedless of valor, but mindful of glory,
Was Higelac's kinsman; the hero-chief angry
Cast then his carved-sword covered with jewels
That it lay on the earth, hard and steel-pointed;
He hoped in his strength, his hand-grapple sturdy.
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
The mother of Grendel; then mighty in struggle
Swung he his enemy, since his anger was kindled,
That she fell to the floor. With furious grapple
She gave him requital early thereafter,
And stretched out to grab him; the strongest of warriors
Faint-mooded stumbled, till he fell in his traces,
Foot-going champion. Then she sat on the hall-guest
And wielded her war-knife wide-bladed, flashing,
For her son would take vengeance, her one only bairn.
His breast-armor woven bode on his shoulder;
It guarded his life, the entrance defended
'Gainst sword-point and edges. Ecgtheow's son there
Had fatally journeyed, champion of Geatmen,
In the arms of the ocean, had the armor not given,
Close-woven corslet, comfort and succor,
And had God most holy not awarded the victory,
All-knowing Lord; easily did heaven's
Ruler most righteous arrange it with justice;
Uprose he erect ready for battle.

BEOWULF IS DOUBLE-CONQUEROR.

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
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,
That the fiend-woman's neck firmly it grappled,
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,
Just as from heaven gemlike shineth
The torch of the firmament. He glanced 'long the building,
And turned by the wall then, Higelac's vassal
Raging and wrathful raised his battle-sword
Strong by the handle. The edge was not useless
To the hero-in-battle, but he speedily wished to
Give Grendel requital for the many assaults he
Had worked on the West-Danes not once, but often,
When he slew in slumber the subjects of Hrothgar,
Swallowed down fifteen sleeping retainers
Of the folk of the Danemen, and fully as many
Carried away, a horrible prey.
He gave him requital, grim-raging champion,
When he saw on his rest-place weary of conflict
Grendel lying, of life-joys bereavèd,
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
Gazed on the sea-deeps, that the surging wave-currents
Were mightily mingled, the mere-flood was gory:
Of the good one the gray-haired together held converse,
The hoary of head, that they hoped not to see again
The atheling ever, that exulting in victory
He'd return there to visit the distinguished folk-ruler:
Then many concluded the mere-wolf had killed him.
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
Soul-sick, sorrowful, the sea-waves regarding:
They wished and yet weened not their well-loved friend-lord
To see any more. The sword-blade began then,
The blood having touched it, contracting and shriveling
With battle-icicles; 'twas a wonderful marvel
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,
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:
So hot was the blood, the strange-spirit poisonous
That in it did perish. He early swam off then
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
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.
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,
The highway familiar: men very daring
Bare then the head from the sea-cliff, burdening
Each of the earlmen, excellent-valiant.
Four of them had to carry with labor
The head of Grendel to the high towering gold-hall
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,
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:
The warriors beheld then a wonderful sight.

BEOWULF BRINGS HIS TROPHIES.—HROTHGAR'S GRATITUDE.

- Beowulf relates his last exploit.
- God was fighting with me.
- Heorot is freed from monsters.

- The famous sword is presented to Hrothgar.
- Hrothgar looks closely at the old sword.
- It had belonged to a race hateful to God.
- Hrothgar praises Beowulf.
- Heremod's career is again contrasted with Beowulf's.
- [Heremond was a] wretched failure of a king, to give no jewels to his retainers.
- Hrothgar moralizes.

"How all-ruling God from greatness of spirit
 Giveth wisdom to children of men,
 Manor and earlship: all things He ruleth.
 He often permitteth the mood-thought of man of
 The illustrious lineage to lean to possessions,
 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;
 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,
 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."

HROTHGAR MORALIZES.—REST AFTER LABOR.

"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

Him seemeth too small, savage he hoardeth,
Nor boastfully giveth gold-plated rings,
The fate of the future flouts and forgetteth
Since God had erst given him greatness no little,
Wielder of Glory. His end-day anear,
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,
Best of the heroes, from bale-strife defend thee,
And choose thee the better, counsels eternal;
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
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,
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,
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,
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."

- Beowulf is fagged,⁴⁵ and seeks rest.
- The Geats prepare to leave Dane-land.
- Unferth asks Beowulf to accept his sword as a gift. Beowulf thanks him.

SORROW AT PARTING.

- Beowulf's farewell.
 - I shall be ever ready to aid thee.
 - My liegelord will encourage me in aiding thee.
- [Hrothgar responds]
 - O Beowulf, thou art wise beyond thy years.
 - Should Higelac die, the Geats could find no better successor than thou wouldst make.
 - Thou hast healed the ancient breach between our races.
- Parting gifts.
- Hrothgar kisses Beowulf, and weeps.
- The old king is deeply grieved to part with his benefactor.
- Giving liberally is the true proof of kingship.

THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY.—THE TWO QUEENS.

- The coast-guard again.
- Beowulf gives the guard a handsome sword.
- The Geats see their own land again.
- The port-warden is anxiously looking for them.
- Hygd, the noble queen of Higelac, lavish of gifts.
- Offa's consort, Thrytho, is contrasted with Hygd.

Thrytho nursed anger, excellent folk-queen,

Hot-burning hatred: no hero whatever

'Mong household companions, her husband excepted

Dared to adventure to look at the woman

With eyes in the daytime; 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,

⁴⁵ Exhausted

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;
Other ale-drinking earlmen asserted
That fearful folk-sorrows fewer she wrought them,
Treachorous doings, since first she was given
Adorned with gold to the war-hero youthful,
For her origin honored, when Offa's great palace
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,
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
For help unto heroes, Heming's kinsman,
Grandson of Garmund, great in encounters.

BEOWULF AND HIGELAC.

- Beowulf and his party seek Higelac.
- Beowulf sits by his liegelord.
- Queen Hygd receives the heroes.
- Higelac is greatly interested in Beowulf's adventures.
 - Give an account of thy adventures, Beowulf dear.
 - My suspense has been great.
- Beowulf narrates his adventures.
 - Grendel's kindred have no cause to boast.
 - Hrothgar received me very cordially.
 - The queen also showed up no little honor.
 - Hrothgar's lovely daughter.
 - She is betrothed to Ingeld, in order to unite the Danes and Heathobards.

BEOWULF NARRATES HIS ADVENTURES TO HIGELAC.

- Ingeld is stirred up to break the truce.
- Having made these preliminary statements, I will now tell thee of Grendel, the monster.
- Hondscio fell first
- I reflected honor upon my people.
- King Hrothgar lavished gifts upon me.
- The old king is sad over the loss of his youthful vigor.
- Grendel's mother.
- Æschere falls a prey to her vengeance.
- She suffered not his body to be burned, but ate it.
- I sought the creature in her den, and hewed her head off.
- Jewels were freely bestowed upon me.

GIFT-GIVING IS MUTUAL.

- [Beowulf speaks]
 - All my gifts I lay at thy feet.
 - This armor I have belonged of yore to Heregar.
- Higelac loves his nephew Beowulf.
- Beowulf gives Hygd the necklace that Wealhtheow had given him.
- Beowulf is famous.
- He is requited for the slights suffered in earlier days.

They fully believed him idle and sluggish,

An indolent atheling.

- Higelac overwhelms the conqueror with gifts.
- After Heardred's death, Beowulf becomes king.
- [Beowulf] rules the Geats fifty years, [and then] the fire-drake.

He fittingly ruled them a fifty of winters

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

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

Dragon, to govern, who guarded a treasure,

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

A path 'neath it lay, unknown unto mortals.

Some one of earthmen entered the mountain,

The heathenish hoard laid hold of with ardor;

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THE HOARD AND THE DRAGON.

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⁴⁶ Indicates a gap or corruption in the original manuscript.

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,

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* * * * * when the onset surprised him,
He a gem-vessel saw there: many of suchlike
Ancient ornaments in the earth-cave were lying,
As in days of yore some one of men of
Illustrious lineage, as a legacy monstrous,
There had secreted them, careful and thoughtful,
Dear-valued jewels. Death had offsnatched them,
In the days of the past, and the one man moreover
Of the flower of the folk who fared there the longest,
Was fain to defer it, friend-mourning warder,
A little longer to be left in enjoyment
Of long-lasting treasure. A barrow all-ready
Stood on the plain the stream-currents nigh to,
New by the ness-edge, unnethe of approaching:
The keeper of rings carried within a
Ponderous deal of the treasure of nobles,
Of gold that was beaten, briefly he spake then:
“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,
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
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,
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
No few of the world-folk widely hath scattered!"
So, woful of spirit one after all
Lamented mournfully, moaning in sadness
By day and by night, till death with its billows
Dashed on his spirit. Then the ancient dusk-scather
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
The hoard in the earth, where old he is guarding
The heathenish treasure; he'll be nowise the better.
So three-hundred winters the waster of peoples
Held upon earth that excellent hoard-hall,
Till the forementioned earlman angered him bitterly:
The beat-plated beaker he bare to his chieftain
And fullest remission for all his remissness
Begged of his liegeland. Then the hoard was discovered,
The treasure was taken, his petition was granted

The lorn-mooded liegeman. His lord regarded
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
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:
Gleaming and wild he oft went round the cavern,
All of it outward; not any of earthmen
Was seen in that desert. Yet he joyed in the battle,
Rejoiced in the conflict: oft he turned to the barrow,
Sought for the gem-cup; this he soon perceived then
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.
Then the day was done as the dragon would have it,
He no longer would wait on the wall, but departed
Fire-impelled, flaming. Fearful the start was
To earls in the land, as it early thereafter
To their giver-of-gold was grievously ended.

BRAVE THOUGH AGED.—REMINISCENCES.

The stranger⁴⁷ began then to vomit forth fire,
To burn the great manor; the blaze then glimmered

⁴⁷ The dragon

For anguish to earlmen, not anything living
Was the hateful air-goer willing to leave there.
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.
He had circled with fire the folk of those regions,
With brand and burning; in the barrow he trusted,
In the wall and his war-might: the weening deceived him.
Then straight was the horror to Beowulf published,
Early forsooth, that his own native homestead,
The best of buildings, was burning and melting,
Gift-seat of Geatmen. 'Twas a grief to the spirit
Of the good-mooded hero, the greatest of sorrows:
The wise one weened then that wielding his kingdom
'Gainst the ancient commandments, he had bitterly angered
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,
Prince of the Weders, was planning to wreak him.
The warmen's defender bade them to make him,
Earlmen's atheling, an excellent war-shield
Wholly of iron: fully he knew then
That wood from the forest was helpless to aid him,
Shield against fire. The long-worthy ruler
Must live the last of his limited earth-days,
Of life in the world and the worm along with him,
Though he long had been holding hoard-wealth in plenty.

Then the ring-prince disdained to seek with a war-band,
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
A heap of hostility, hazarded dangers,
War-thane, when Hrothgar's palace he cleansèd,
Conquering combatant, clutched in the battle
The kinsmen of Grendel, of kindred detested.
'Twas of hand-fights not least where Higelac was slaughtered,
When the king of the Geatmen with clashings of battle,
Friend-lord of folks in Frisian dominions,
Offspring of Hrethrel perished through sword-drink,
With battle-swords beaten; thence Beowulf came then
On self-help relying, swam through the waters;
He bare on his arm, lone-going, thirty
Outfits of armor, when the ocean he mounted.
The Hetwars by no means had need to be boastful
Of their fighting afoot, who forward to meet him
Carried their war-shields: not many returned from
The brave-mooded battle-knight back to their homesteads.
Ecgtheow's bairn o'er the bight-courses swam then,
Lone-goer lorn to his land-folk returning,
Where Hygd to him tendered treasure and kingdom,
Rings and dominion: her son she not trusted,
To be able to keep the kingdom devised him
'Gainst alien races, on the death of King Higelac.
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,

Gracious, with honor, till he grew to be older,
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
Distributed treasure, distinguished folk-leader.
'Twas the end of his earth-days; injury fatal
By swing of the sword he received as a greeting,
Offspring of Higelac; Ongentheow's bairn
Later departed to visit his homestead,
When Heardred was dead; let Beowulf rule them,
Govern the Geatmen: good was that folk-king.

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
With warriors and weapons: with woe-journeys cold he
After avenged him, the king's life he took.
So he came off uninjured from all of his battles,
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 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.
That in the throng was thirteenth of heroes,
That caused the beginning of conflict so bitter,

Captive and wretched, must sad-mooded thenceward
Point out the place: he passed then unwillingly
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,
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,
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:
"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,
Gave me treasure and feasting, our kinship remembered;
Not ever was I any less dear to him
Knight in the boroughs, than the bairns of his household,
Herebald and Hæthcyn and Higelac mine.
To the eldest unjustly by acts of a kinsman
Was murder-bed strewn, since him Hæthcyn from horn-bow
His sheltering chieftain shot with an arrow,
Erred in his aim and injured his kinsman,
One brother the other, with blood-sprinkled spear:

'Twas a feeless fight, finished in malice,
Sad to his spirit; the folk-prince however
Had to part from existence with vengeance untaken.
So to hoar-headed hero 'tis heavily crushing
To live to see his son as he rideth
Young on the gallows: then measures he chanteth,
A song of sorrow, when his son is hanging
For the raven's delight, and aged and hoary
He is unable to offer any assistance.
Every morning his offspring's departure
Is constant recalled: he cares not to wait for
The birth of an heir in his borough-enclosures,
Since that one through death-pain the deeds hath experienced.
He heart-grieved beholds in the house of his son the
Wine-building wasted, the wind-lodging places
Reaved of their roaring; the riders are sleeping,
The knights in the grave; there's no sound of the harp-wood,
Joy in the yards, as of yore were familiar.

REMINISCENCES (CONTINUED).—BEOWULF'S LAST BATTLE.

"He seeks then his chamber, singeth a woe-song
One for the other; all too extensive
Seemed homesteads and plains. So the helm of the Weders
Mindful of Herebald heart-sorrow carried,
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,
He gave up glee, God-light elected;
He left to his sons, as the man that is rich does,

His land and fortress, when from life he departed.
Then was crime and hostility 'twixt Swedes and Geatmen,
O'er wide-stretching water warring was mutual,
Burdensome hatred, when Hrethel had perished,
And Ongentheow's offspring were active and valiant,
Wished not to hold to peace oversea, but
Round Hreosna-beorh often accomplished
Cruellest massacre. This my kinsman avengèd,
The feud and fury, as 'tis found on inquiry,
Though one of them paid it with forfeit of life-joys,
With price that was hard: the struggle became then
Fatal to Hæthcyn, lord of the Geatmen.
Then I heard that at morning one brother the other
With edges of irons egged on to murder,
Where Ongentheow maketh onset on Eofor:
The helmet crashed, the hoary-haired Scylfing
Sword-smitten fell, his hand then remembered
Feud-hate sufficient, refused not the death-blow.
The gems that he gave me, with jewel-bright sword I
'Quited in contest, as occasion was offered:
Land he allowed me, life-joy at homestead,
Manor to live on. Little he needed
From Gepids or Danes or in Sweden to look for
Trooper less true, with treasure to buy him;
'Mong foot-soldiers ever in front I would hie me,
Alone in the vanguard, and evermore gladly
Warfare shall wage, while this weapon endureth
That late and early often did serve me
When I proved before heroes the slayer of Dæghrefn,
Knight of the Hugmen: he by no means was suffered
To the king of the Frisians to carry the jewels,

The breast-decoration; but the banner-possessor
Bowed in the battle, brave-mooded atheling.
No weapon was slayer, but war-grapple broke then
The surge of his spirit, his body destroying.
Now shall weapon's edge make war for the treasure,
And hand and firm-sword." Beowulf spake then,
Boast-words uttered—the latest occasion:
"I braved in my youth-days battles unnumbered;
Still am I willing the struggle to look for,
Fame-deeds perform, folk-warden prudent,
If the hateful despoiler forth from his cavern
Seeketh me out!" Each of the heroes,
Helm-bearers sturdy, he thereupon greeted
Belovèd co-liegemen—his last salutation:
"No brand would I bear, no blade for the dragon,
Wist I a way my word-boast to 'complish
Else with the monster, as with Grendel I did it;
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
I'll not flee from a foot-length, the foeman uncanny.
At the wall 'twill befall us as Fate decreeth,
Each one's Creator. I am eager in spirit,
With the wingèd war-hero to away with all boasting.
Bide on the barrow with burnies protected,
Earls in armor, which of us two may better
Bear his disaster, when the battle is over.
'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!"

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
Had lived through, most worthy, when foot-troops collided,
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
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
'Neath the gray-colored stone. Stirred was his hatred,
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 earth re-echoed. The earl 'neath the barrow
Lifted his shield, lord of the Geatmen,
Tow'rd the terrible stranger: the ring-twisted creature's
Heart was then ready to seek for a struggle.
The excellent battle-king first brandished his weapon,
The ancient heirloom, of edges unblunted,
To the death-planners twain was terror from other.
The lord of the troopers intrepidly stood then
'Gainst his high-rising shield, when the dragon coiled him
Quickly together: in corslet he bided.

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,
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,
Burdened with bale-griefs. Then the barrow-protector,
When the sword-blow had fallen, was fierce in his spirit,
Flinging his fires, flamings of battle
Gleamed then afar: the gold-friend of Weders
Boasted no conquests, his battle-sword failed him
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,
As each one of earthmen existence must forfeit.
'Twas early thereafter the excellent warriors
Met with each other. Anew and afresh
The hoard-ward took heart (gasps heaved then his bosom):
Sorrow he suffered encircled with fire
Who the people erst governed. His companions by no means
Were banded about him, bairns of the princes,
With valorous spirit, but they sped to the forest,
Seeking for safety. The soul-deeps of one were
Ruffled by care: kin-love can never
Aught in him waver who well doth consider.

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

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.
Then he minded the holding that erst he had given him,
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,
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
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,
Like his father before him, fame-deeds to 'complish;
Then he gave him 'mong Geatmen a goodly array of
Weeds for his warfare; he went from life then
Old on his journey. 'Twas the earliest time then
That the youthful champion might charge in the battle
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:

“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:
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
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,
While the heat yet rageth, horrible fire-fight.
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,
'Less first we are able to fell and destroy the
Long-hating foeman, to defend the life of
The prince of the Weders. Well do I know 't isn't
Earned by his exploits, he only of Geatmen
Sorrow should suffer, sink in the battle:
Brand and helmet to us both shall be common,
Shield-cover, burnie.” Through the bale-smoke he stalked then,
Went under helmet to the help of his chieftain,
Briefly discoursing: “Beowulf dear,
Perform thou all fully, as thou formerly saidst,
In thy youthful years, that while yet thou livedst

Thou wouldst let thine honor not ever be lessened.
Thy life thou shalt save, mighty in actions,
Atheling undaunted, with all of thy vigor;
I'll give thee assistance." The dragon came raging,
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
To the youthful spear-hero: but the young-aged stripling
Quickly advanced 'neath his kinsman's war-target,
Since his own had been ground in the grip of the fire.
Then the warrior-king was careful of glory,
He soundly smote with sword-for-the-battle,
That it stood in the head by hatred driven;
Nægling was shivered, the old and iron-made
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
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.
Then the people-despoiler—third of his onsets—
Fierce-raging fire-drake, of feud-hate was mindful,
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.

THE FATAL STRUGGLE.—BEOWULF'S LAST MOMENTS.

Then I heard that at need of the king of the people

The upstanding earlman exhibited prowess,
Vigor and courage, as suited his nature;
He his head did not guard, but the high-minded liegeman's
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
Later to lessen. The liegelord himself then
Retained his consciousness, brandished his war-knife,
Battle-sharp, bitter, that he bare on his armor:
The Weder-lord cut the worm in the middle.
They had felled the enemy (life drove out then
Puissant prowess), the pair had destroyed him,
Land-chiefs related: so a liegeman should prove him,
A thaneman when needed. To the prince 'twas the last of
His era of conquest by his own great achievements,
The latest of world-deeds. The wound then began
Which the earth-dwelling dragon erstwhile had wrought him
To burn and to swell. He soon then discovered
That bitterest bale-woe in his bosom was raging,
Poison within. The atheling advanced then,
That along by the wall, he prudent of spirit
Might sit on a settle; he saw the giant-work,
How arches of stone strengthened with pillars
The earth-hall eternal inward supported.
Then the long-worthy liegeman laved with his hand the
Far-famous chieftain, gory from sword-edge,
Refreshing the face of his friend-lord and ruler,
Sated with battle, unbinding his helmet.
Beowulf answered, of his injury spake he,
His wound that was fatal (he was fully aware

He had lived his allotted life-days enjoying
The pleasures of earth; then past was entirely
His measure of days, death very near):
“My son I would give now my battle-equipments,
Had any of heirs been after me granted,
Along of my body. This people I governed
Fifty of winters: no king ’mong my neighbors
Dared to encounter me with comrades-in-battle,
Try me with terror. The time to me ordered
I bided at home, mine own kept fitly,
Sought me no snares, swore me not many
Oaths in injustice. Joy over all this
I’m able to have, though ill with my death-wounds;
Hence the Ruler of Earthmen need not charge me
With the killing of kinsmen, when cometh my life out
Forth from my body. Fare thou with haste now
To behold the hoard ’neath the hoar-grayish stone,
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,
Having the heap of hoard-gems, to yield my
Life and the land-folk whom long I have governed.”

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.
Then the trusty retainer treasure-gems many
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,
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
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,
To examine the jewels. Sight of the dragon
Not any was offered, but edge offcarried him.
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,
As himself would fain have it, and took off the standard,
The brightest of beacons; the bill had erst injured
(Its edge was of iron), the old-ruler's weapon,
Him who long had watched as ward of the jewels,
Who fire-terror carried hot for the treasure,

Rolling in battle, in middlemost darkness,
Till murdered he perished. The messenger hastened,
Not loth to return, hurried by jewels:
Curiosity urged him if, excellent-mooded,
Alive he should find the lord of the Weders
Mortally wounded, at the place where he left him.
'Mid the jewels he found then the famous old chieftain,
His liegeland beloved, at his life's-end gory:
He thereupon 'gan to lave him with water,
Till the point of his word piercèd his breast-board.
Beowulf spake (the gold-gems he noticed),
The old one in sorrow: "For the jewels I look on
Thanks do I utter for all to the Ruler,
Wielder of Worship, with words of devotion,
The Lord everlasting, that He let me such treasures
Gain for my people ere death overtook me.
Since I've bartered the aged life to me granted
For treasure of jewels, attend ye henceforward
The wants of the war-thanes; I can wait here no longer.
The battle-famed bid ye to build them a grave-hill,
Bright when I'm burned, at the brim-current's limit;
As a memory-mark to the men I have governed,
Aloft it shall tower on Whale's-Ness uprising,
That earls of the ocean hereafter may call it
Beowulf's barrow, those who barks ever-dashing
From a distance shall drive o'er the darkness of waters."
The bold-mooded troop-lord took from his neck then
The ring that was golden, gave to his liegeman,
The youthful war-hero, his gold-flashing helmet,
His collar and war-mail, bade him well to enjoy them:
"Thou art latest left of the line of our kindred,

Of Wægmunding people: Weird hath offcarried
All of my kinsmen to the Creator's glory,
Earls in their vigor: I shall after them fare."
'Twas the aged liegelord's last-spoken word in
His musings of spirit, ere he mounted the fire,
The battle-waves burning: from his bosom departed
His soul to seek the sainted ones' glory.

THE DEAD FOES.—WIGLAF'S BITTER TAUNTS.

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,
Horrible earth-drake, harassed with sorrow:
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
The flier-from-farland fell to the earth
Hard by his hoard-house, hopped he at midnight
Not e'er through the air, nor exulting in jewels
Suffered them to see him: but he sank then to earthward
Through the hero-chief's handwork. I heard sure it throve then
But few in the land of liegemen of valor,
Though of every achievement bold he had proved him,
To run 'gainst the breath of the venomous scather,
Or the hall of the treasure to trouble with hand-blows,
If he watching had found the ward of the hoard-hall
On the barrow abiding. Beowulf's part of
The treasure of jewels was paid for with death;
Each of the twain had attained to the end of

Life so unlasting. Not long was the time till
The tardy-at-battle returned from the thicket,
The timid truce-breakers ten all together,
Who durst not before play with the lances
In the prince of the people's pressing emergency;
But blushing with shame, with shields they betook them,
With arms and armor where the old one was lying:
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
Life to retain, and nowise to alter
The will of the Wielder; the World-Ruler's power
Would govern the actions of each one of heroes,
As yet He is doing. From the young one forthwith then
Could grim-worded greeting be got for him quickly
Whose courage had failed him. Wiglaf discoursed then,
Weohstan his son, sad-mooded hero,
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,—
That he wildly wasted his war-gear undoubtedly
When battle o'ertook him. The troop-king no need had
To glory in comrades; yet God permitted him,
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,
Helping my kinsman (my strength overtaking):
He waxed the weaker when with weapon I smote on
My mortal opponent, the fire less strongly
Flamed from his bosom. Too few of protectors
Came round the king at the critical moment.
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
Shall learn of your leaving your lord so basely,
The dastardly deed. Death is more pleasant
To every earlman than infamous life is!"

THE MESSENGER OF DEATH.

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,
The end of his lifetime and the coming again of
The liegelord belovèd. Little reserved he
Of news that was known, who the ness-cliff did travel,
But he truly discoursed to all that could hear him:
"Now the free-giving friend-lord of the folk of the Weders,
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
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,
For friend and for foeman. The folk now expecteth
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,
When Higelac came with an army of vessels
Faring to Friesland, where the Frankmen in battle
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
For truce or for truth trust I but little;
But widely 'twas known that near Ravenswood Ongentheow
Sundered Hæthcyn the Hrethling from life-joys,
When for pride overweening the War-Scylfings first did
Seek the Geatmen with savage intentions.
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,
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:
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
And faring followed the flower of the troopers.

THE MESSENGER'S RETROSPECT.

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

Wulf wounds Ongentheow.

Ongentheow gives a stout blow in return.

Eofor smites Ongentheow fiercely.

Ongentheow is slain.

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

Higelac rewards the brothers.

To Eofor he also gives his only daughter in marriage.

It is time for us to pay the last marks of respect to our lord.

Now is haste most fitting,

That the lord of liegemen we look upon yonder,

And that one carry on journey to death-pyre

Who ring-presents gave us. Not aught of it all

Shall melt with the brave one—there's a mass of bright jewels,

Gold beyond measure, grewsomely purchased

And ending it all ornament-rings too

Bought with his life; these fire shall devour,

Flame shall cover, no earlman shall wear

A jewel-memento, nor beautiful virgin

Have on her neck rings to adorn her,

But wretched in spirit bereavèd of gold-gems

She shall oft with others be exiled and banished,

Since the leader of liegemen hath laughter forsaken,

Mirth and merriment. Hence many a war-spear

Cold from the morning shall be clutched in the fingers,

Heaved in the hand, no harp-music's sound shall
Waken the warriors, but the wan-coated raven
Fain over fey ones freely shall gabble,
Shall say to the eagle how he sped in the eating,
When, the wolf his companion, he plundered the slain."
So the high-minded hero was rehearsing these stories
Loathsome to hear; he lied as to few of
Weirds and of words. All the war-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,
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,
The worm⁴⁸ 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
To rejoice in the air, thereafter departing
To visit his den; he in death was then fastened,
He would joy in no other earth-hollowed caverns.
There stood round about him beakers and vessels,
Dishes were lying and dear-valued weapons,
With iron-rust eaten, as in earth's mighty bosom
A thousand of winters there they had rested:
That mighty bequest then with magic was guarded,

⁴⁸ Dragon

Gold of the ancients, that earlman not any
The ring-hall could touch, save Ruling-God only,
Sooth-king of Vict'ries gave whom He wished to
(He is earth-folk's protector) to open the treasure,
E'en to such among mortals as seemed to Him proper.

WIGLAF'S SAD STORY.—THE HOARD CARRIED OFF.

Then 'twas seen that the journey prospered him little
Who wrongly within had the ornaments hidden
Down 'neath the wall. The warden erst slaughtered
Some few of the folk-troop: the feud then thereafter
Was hotly avengèd. 'Tis a wonder where,
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,
Assaults, he sought for: himself had no knowledge
How his leaving this life was likely to happen.
So to doomsday, famous folk-leaders down did
Call it with curses—who 'complished it there—
That that man should be ever of ill-deeds convicted,
Confined in foul-places, fastened in hell-bonds,
Punished with plagues, who this place should e'er ravage.
He cared not for gold: rather the Wielder's
Favor preferred he first to get sight of.
Wiglaf discoursed then, Wihstan his son:
"Oft many an earlman on one man's account must
Sorrow endure, as to us it hath happened.
The liegelord belovèd we could little prevail on,
Kingdom's keeper, counsel to follow,
Not to go to the guardian of the gold-hoard, but let him

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
The prince of the people pricked to come thither.
I was therein and all of it looked at,
The building's equipments, since access was given me,
Not kindly at all entrance permitted
Within under earth-wall. Hastily seized I
And held in my hands a huge-weighing burden
Of hoard-treasures costly, hither out bare them
To my liegelord beloved: life was yet in him,
And consciousness also; the old one discoursed then
Much and mournfully, commanded to greet you,
Bade that remembering the deeds of your friend-lord
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,
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,
Well-beloved warrior, 'neath the Wielder's protection."
Then the son of Wihstan bade orders be given,
Mood-valiant man, to many of heroes,
Holders of homesteads, that they hither from far,
Leaders of liegemen, should look for the good one
With wood for his pyre: "The flame shall now swallow

(The wan fire shall wax) 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,
Furnished with feathers followed the arrow."
Now the wise-mooded son of Wihstan did summon
The best of the braves from the band of the ruler
Seven together; 'neath the enemy's roof he
Went with the seven; one of the heroes
Who fared at the front, a fire-blazing torch-light
Bare in his hand. No lot then decided
Who that hoard should havoc, when hero-earls saw it
Lying in the cavern uncared-for entirely,
Rusting to ruin: they rued then but little
That they hastily hence hauled out the treasure,
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.
There wounden gold on a wain⁴⁹ was uploaded,
A mass unmeasured, the men-leader off then,
The hero hoary, to Whale's-Ness was carried.

THE BURNING OF BEOWULF.

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.
Soldiers began then to make on the barrow

⁴⁹ Wagon

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

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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,
In ten-days' space, with a wall surrounded it,
As wisest of world-folk could most worthily plan it.
They placed in the barrow rings and jewels,
All such ornaments as erst in the treasure
War-mooded men had won in possession:
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,
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,
When forth from his body he fares to destruction.
So lamented mourning the men of the Geats,
Fond-loving vassals, the fall of their lord,
Said he was kindest of kings under heaven,
Gentlest of men, most winning of manner,
Friendliest to folk-troops and fondest of honor.

GLOSSARY OF PROPER NAMES

Ælfhere.—A kinsman of Wiglaf.

Æschere.—Confidential friend of King Hrothgar. Elder brother of Yrmenlaf. Killed by Grendel.

Beanstan.—Father of Breca.

Beowulf.—Son of Scyld, the founder of the dynasty of Scyldings. Father of Healfdene, and grandfather of Hrothgar.

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.

Breca.—Beowulf's opponent in the famous swimming-match.

Brondings.—A people ruled by Breca.

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

Cain.—Progenitor of Grendel and other monsters.

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

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.

Ecglaf.—Father of Unferth, who taunts Beowulf.

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.

Ecgwela.—A king of the Danes before Scyld.

Elan.—Sister of Hrothgar, and probably wife of Ongentheow, king of the Swedes.

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

Eadgils.—Son of Ohthere and brother of Eanmund.

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.

Eofor.—A Geatish hero who slays Ongentheow in war, and is rewarded by Hygelac with the hand of his only daughter.

Eormenic.—A Gothic king, from whom Hama took away the famous Broisinga mene.

Eomær.—Son of Offa and Thrytho, king and queen of the Angles.

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.

Fin-land.—The country to which Beowulf was driven by the currents in his swimming-match.

Fitela.—Son and nephew of King Sigemund.

Folcwalda.—Father of Finn.

Franks.—Introduced occasionally in referring to the death of Higelac.

Frisians.—A part of them are ruled by Finn. Some of them were engaged in the struggle in which Higelac was slain.

Freaware.—Daughter of King Hrothgar. Married to Ingeld, a Heathobard prince.

Froda.—King of the Heathobards, and father of Ingeld.

Garmund.—Father of Offa.

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.

Gepids.—Named in connection with the Danes and Swedes.

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.

Guthlaf.—A Dane of Hnæf's party.

Half-Danes.—Branch of the Danes to which Hnæf belonged.

Halga.—Surnamed the Good. Younger brother of Hrothgar.

Hama.—Takes the Broisinga mene from Eormenic.

Hæreth.—Father of Higelac's queen, Hygd.

Hæthcyn.—Son of Hrethel and brother of Higelac. Kills his brother Herebeald accidentally. Is slain at Ravenswood, fighting against Ongentheow.

Helmings.—The race to which Queen Wealhtheow belonged.

Heming.—A kinsman of Garmund, perhaps nephew.

Hengest.—A Danish leader. Takes command on the fall of Hnæf.

Herebeald.—Eldest son of Hrethel, the Geatish king, and brother of Higelac. Killed by his younger brother Hæthcyn.

Heremod.—A Danish king of a dynasty before the Scylding line. Was a source of great sorrow to his people.

Hereric.—Referred to as uncle of Heardred, but otherwise unknown.

Hetwars.—Another name for the Franks.

Healfdene.—Grandson of Scyld and father of Hrothgar. Ruled the Danes long and well.

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.

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.

Heatholaf.—A Wylfing warrior slain by Beowulf's father.

Heathoremes.—The people on whose shores Breca is cast by the waves during his contest with Beowulf.

Heorogar.—Elder brother of Hrothgar, and surnamed 'Weoroda Ræswa,' Prince of the Troopers.

Hereward.—Son of the above.

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.

Hildeburg.—Wife of Finn, daughter of Hoce, and related to Hnæf,—probably his sister.

Hnæf.—Leader of a branch of the Danes called Half-Danes. Killed in the struggle at Finn's castle.

Hondscio.—One of Beowulf's companions. Killed by Grendel just before Beowulf grappled with that monster.

Hoce.—Father of Hildeburg and probably of Hnæf.

Hrethel.—King of the Geats, father of Higelac, and grandfather of Beowulf.

Hrethla.—Once used for Hrethel.

Hrethmen.—Another name for the Danes.

Hrethric.—Son of Hrothgar.

Hreosna-beorh.—A promontory in Geat-land, near which Ohthere's sons made plundering raids.

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.—

Hrothmund.—Son of Hrothgar.

Hrothulf.—Probably a son of Halga, younger brother of Hrothgar. Certainly on terms of close intimacy in Hrothgar's palace.

Hrunting.—Unferth's sword, lent to Beowulf.

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

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

Hunferth.—Sometimes used for Unferth.

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

Hygd.—Wife of Higelac, and daughter of Hæreth. There are some indications that she married Beowulf after she became a widow.

Ingeld.—Son of the Heathobard king, Froda. Marries Hrothgar's daughter, Freaware, in order to reconcile the two peoples.

Ingwins.—Another name for the Danes.

Jutes.—Name sometimes applied to Finn's people.

Lafing.—Name of a famous sword presented to Hengest by Hun.

Merewing.—A Frankish king, probably engaged in the war in which Higelac was slain.

Nægling.—Beowulf's sword.

Offa.—King of the Angles, and son of Garmund. Marries the terrible Thrytho who is so strongly contrasted with Hygd.

Ohthere.—Son of Ongentheow, king of the Swedes. He is father of Eanmund and Eadgils.

Onela.—Brother of Ohthere.

Ongentheow.—King of Sweden, of the Scylding dynasty. Married, perhaps, Elan, daughter of Healfdene.

Oslaf.—A Dane of Hnæf's party.

Ravenswood.—The forest near which Hæthcyn was slain.

Scefing.—Applied 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.

Scyldings.—The descendants of Scyld. They are also called Honor-Scyldings, Victory-Scyldings, War-Scyldings, etc. (See 'Danes,' above.)

Scyldings.—A Swedish royal line to which Wiglaf belonged.

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.

Swerting.—Grandfather of Higelac, and father of Hrethel.

Swedes.—People of Sweden, ruled by the Scyldings.

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.

Unferth.—Son of Ecglaef, 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.

Wæls.—Father of Sigemund.

Wægmunding.—A name occasionally applied to Wiglaf and Beowulf, and perhaps derived from a common ancestor, Wægmund.

Weders.—Another name for Geats or Wedergeats.

Wayland.—A fabulous smith mentioned in this poem and in other old Teutonic literature.

Wendels.—The people of Wulfgar, Hrothgar's messenger and retainer. (Perhaps = Vandals.)

Wealththeow.—Wife of Hrothgar. Her queenly courtesy is well shown in the poem.

Weohstan, or Wihstan.—A Wægmunding, and father of Wiglaf.

Whale's Ness.—A prominent promontory, on which Beowulf's mound was built.

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.

Wonred.—Father of Wulf and Eofor.

Wulf.—Son of Wonred. Engaged in the battle between Higelac's and Ongentheow's forces, and had a hand-to-hand fight with Ongentheow himself. Ongentheow disables him, and is thereupon slain by Eofor.

Wulfgar.—Lord of the Wendels, and retainer of Hrothgar.

Wylfings.—A people to whom belonged Heatholaf, who was slain by Ecgtheow

Yrmenlaf.—Younger brother of Æschere, the hero whose death grieved Hrothgar so deeply.

LIST OF WORDS AND PHRASES NOT IN GENERAL USE

ATHELING.—Prince, nobleman.

BAIRN.—Son, child.

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

BATTLE-SARK.—Armor.

BEAKER.—Cup, drinking-vessel.

BEGEAR.—Prepare.

BIGHT.—Bay, sea.

BILL.—Sword.

BOSS.—Ornamental projection.

BRACTEATE.—A round ornament on a necklace.

BRAND.—Sword.

BURN.—Stream.

BURNIE.—Armor.

CARLE.—Man, hero.

EARL.—Nobleman, any brave man.

EKE.—Also.

EMPRISE.—Enterprise, undertaking.

ERST.—Formerly.

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

FAIN.—Glad.

FERRY.—Bear, carry.

FEY.—Fated, doomed.

FLOAT.—Vessel, ship.

FOIN.—To lunge (Shaks.).

GLORY OF KINGS.—God.

GREWSOME.—Cruel, fierce.

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

HELM.—Helmet, protector.

HENCHMAN.—Retainer, vassal.

HIGHT.—Am (was) named.

HOLM.—Ocean, curved surface of the sea.

HIMSEEMED.—(It) seemed to him.

LIEF.—Dear, valued.

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

MICKLE.—Much.

NATHLESS.—Nevertheless.

NAZE.—Edge (nose).

NESS.—Edge.

NICKER.—Sea-beast.

QUIT, QUITE.—Requite.

RATHE.—Quickly.

REAVE.—Bereave, deprive.

SAIL-ROAD.—Sea.

SETTLE.—Seat, bench.

SKINKER.—One who pours.

SOOTHLY.—Truly.

SWINGE.—Stroke, blow.

TARGE, TARGET.—Shield.

THROUGHLY.—Thoroughly.

TOLD.—Counted.

UNCANNY.—Ill-featured, grizzly.

UNNETHE.—Difficult.

WAR-SPEED.—Success in war.

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

WEEDED.—Clad (cf. widow's weeds).

WEEN.—Suppose, imagine.

WEIRD.—Fate, Providence.

WHILOM.—At times, formerly, often.

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

WIGHT.—Creature.

WOLD.—Plane, extended surface.

WOT.—Knows.

YOUNKER.—Youth.

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GALLERY



FIGURE 2 JEAN FOUQUET, BATTLE BETWEEN THE FRANCS AND THE DANES IN 515, 1455.

The army of Théoderic, led by his son Théodebert, stops the Danish invaders and sends them fleeing. On the horizon, two ships have already put to sea.⁵⁰

SUTTON HOO SHIP BURIAL ⁵¹

“In 1939 Mrs Edith Pretty, a landowner at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, asked archaeologist Basil Brown to investigate the largest of many Anglo-Saxon burial mounds on her property. Inside, he made one of the most spectacular archaeological discoveries of all time.

Beneath the mound was the imprint of a 27-metre-long ship. At its centre was a ruined burial chamber packed with treasures: Byzantine silverware, sumptuous gold jewellery, a lavish feasting set, and most famously, an ornate iron helmet. Tiny fragments showed that rich textiles once adorned the walls and floor, along with piles of clothes ranging from fine linen overshirts to shaggy woollen cloaks and caps trimmed with fur. The dead man’s body had dissolved in the acidic soil, but he was clearly a person of great standing in the kingdom of East Anglia. He may even have been a king.

⁵⁰ Fouquet, Jean. “Battle between the Franks and the Danes in 515.” *Grand Chronicles of France*. Illuminated Manuscript. 1455. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. *Wikimedia Commons*. Web. 26 May 2014.

⁵¹ “The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial.” The British Museum. Web. 28 May 2014.

The Sutton Hoo ship burial provides remarkable insights into early Anglo-Saxon England. It reveals a place of exquisite craftsmanship and extensive international connections, spanning Europe and beyond. It also shows that the world of great halls, glittering treasures and formidable warriors described in Anglo-Saxon poetry was not a myth.”



BUCKLE FROM A SWORD BELT



SHOULDER CLASPS



GOLD BELT BUCKLE



WHETSTONE (SCEPTRE)



SWORD



HELMET

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