Gracious, with honor, till he grew to be older,
Wielded the Weders. Wide-fleeing outlaws,
Ohthere’s sons, he o’er the waters:
They had stirred a revolt ’gainst the helm of the
Seylings,
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 Heordred was dead; let Beowulf rule them,
Govern the Geatmen: good was that folk-king.

[1] ‘Hám’ (2326), the suggestion of B. is accepted by t.B. and other scholars.
[2] For ‘lāðan cynnes’ (2355), t.B. suggests ‘lāðan cynne,’ apposition to ‘mægum.’ From syntactical and other considerations, this is a most excellent emendation.
[3] Gr. read ‘on feorme’ (2386), rendering: He there at the banquet a fatal
wound received by blows of the sword.

XXXIV.

BEOWULF SEEKS THE DRAGON.—
BEOWULF’S REMINISCENCES.

He planned requital for the folk-leader’s ruin
In days thereafter, to Eadgils the wretched
Becoming an enemy. Ohthere’s son then
Went with a war-troop o’er the wide-stretching currents

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

Which he 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,

Beowulf has been preserved through many perils.

With eleven comrades, he seeks the dragon.

A guide leads the way, but
Captive and wretched, must sad-mooded thenceward
Point out the place: he passed then unwillingly very reluctantly.

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.

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

Hrethel had certainly never seen a son of his ride on the gallows to feed the crows.

The passage beginning ‘swá bið géomorlic’ seems to be an effort to reach a full simile, ‘as … so.’ ‘As it is mournful for an old man, etc. … so the defence of the Weders (2463) bore heart-sorrow, etc.’ The verses 2451 to 2463½ would be parenthetical, the poet’s feelings being so strong as to interrupt the simile. The punctuation of the fourth edition would be better—a comma after ‘galgan’ (2447). The translation may be indicated as follows: (Just) as it is sad for an old man to see his son ride young on the gallows when he himself is uttering mournful measures, a sorrowful song, while his son hangs for a comfort to the raven, and he, old and infirm, cannot render him any kelp—he is constantly reminded, etc., 2451-2463)—so the defence of the Weders, etc.

XXXV.

REMINISCENCES (continued).—
BEOWULF’S LAST BATTLE.

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

[84]
Beowulf: An Anglo-Saxon Epic Poem

Cruelest 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 Scylyng
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,
Let Fate decide
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.

70  'Tis no matter of yours, and man cannot do it,
But me and me only, to measure his strength with
The monster of malice, might-deeds to 'complish.
I with prowess shall gain the gold, or the battle,
Direful death-woe will drag off your ruler!"

[86] The mighty champion rose by his shield then,
Brave under helmet, in battle-mail went he
'Neath steep-rising stone-cliffs, the strength he relied on
Of one man alone: no work for a coward.
Then he saw by the wall who a great many battles

80  Had lived through, most worthy, when foot-troops collided,
Stone-arches standing, stout-hearted champion,
Saw a brook from the barrow bubbling out
thenceward:
The flood of the fountain was fuming with war-flame:
Not nigh to the hoard, for season the briefest

85  Could he brave, without burning, the abyss that was yawning,
The drake was so fiery. The prince of the Weders
Caused then that words came from his bosom,
So fierce was his fury; the firm-hearted shouted:
His battle-clear voice came in resounding

90  'Neath the gray-colored stone. Stirred was his hatred,
The hoard-ward distinguished the speech of a man;
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,

95  The ancient heirloom, of edges unblunted,3
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.

[87] 100 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-grievs. 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.

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

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

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

XXXVI.

WIGLAF THE TRUSTY.—BEOWULF IS DESERTED BY FRIENDS AND BY
The son of Weohstan was Wiglaf entitled,
Shield-warrior precious, prince of the Scyldings,
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,
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
Our lord intended alone to accomplish,
Ward of his people, for most of achievements,
Doings audacious, he did among earth-folk.
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.

45  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,
I would rather die than go home with out my suzerain.

50  '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 'tisn’t
Earned by his exploits, he only of Geatmen
Surely he does not deserve to die alone.

Brand and helmet to us both shall be common,

1Shield-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 livest
Thou wouldst let thine honor not ever be lessened.

55  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

60  To the youthful spear-hero: but the young-agèd stripling
Quickly advanced 'neath his kinsman’s war-target,
Since his own had been ground in the grip of the fire.

Then the warrior-king was careful of glory,
He soundly smote with sword-for-the-battle,

70  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

80  Which every weapon, as I heard on inquiry,
Outstruck in its stroke, when to struggle he carried
The wonderful war-sword: it waxed him no better.
Then the people-despoiler—third of his onsets—
The dragon advances on Beowulf again.

85  Charged on the strong one, when chance was afforded,
Heated and war-grim, seized on his neck
With teeth that were bitter; he bloody did wax with

Our lord is in sore need of us.
Soul-gore seething; sword-blood in waves boiled.

[1] The passage ‘Brand ... burnie,’ is much disputed. In the first place, some eminent critics assume a gap of at least two half-verses.—‘Úrum’ (2660), being a peculiar form, has been much discussed. ‘Byrdu-scrúd’ is also a crux. B. suggests ‘býwdu-scrúd’ = splendid vestments. Nor is ‘bám’ accepted by all, ‘béon’ being suggested. Whatever the individual words, the passage must mean, “I intend to share with him my equipments of defence.”

[2] B. would render: Which, as I heard, excelled in stroke every sword that he carried to the strife, even the strongest (sword). For ‘bônne’ he reads ‘bóne,’ rel. pr.

XXXVII.
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 sleeppeth, 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.”

[1] B. renders: He (W.) did not regard his (the dragon’s) head (since Beowulf had struck it without effect), but struck the dragon a little lower down.
—One crux is to find out whose head is meant; another is to bring out the antithesis between ‘head’ and ‘hand.’

[2] ‘þæt þæt fýr’ (2702), S. emends to ‘ þá þæt fýr ’ = when the fire began to grow less intense afterward. This emendation relieves the passage of a plethora of conjunctive þæt’s.

[3] For ‘gefylfdan’ (2707), S. proposes ‘gefylde.’ The passage would read: He felled the foe (life drove out strength), and they then both had destroyed him, chieftains related. This gives Beowulf the credit of having felled the dragon; then they combine to annihilate him.—For ‘’ellen’ (2707), Kl. suggests ‘e(al)line.’—The reading ‘life drove out strength’ is very unsatisfactory and very peculiar. I would suggest as follows: Adopt S.’s emendation, remove H.’s parenthesis, read ‘ferh-ellen wræc,’ and translate: He felled the foe, drove out his life-strength (that is, made him hors de combat), and then they both, etc.
XXXVIII.

WIGLAF PLUNDERS THE DRAGON’S DEN.—BEOWULF’S DEATH.

Then heard I that Wihstan’s son very quickly, 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 vanity¹

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;² the bill had erst injured (Its edge was of iron), the old-ruler’s weapon, Him who long had watched as ward of the jewels, Who fire-terror carried hot for the treasure, 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 liegelord belovèd, at his life’s-end gory: He thereupon ’gan to lave him with water, Till the point of his word piercèd his breast-hoard. Beowulf spake (the gold-gems he noticed),
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.

[1] The word ‘oferhígian’ (2767) being vague and little understood, two quite distinct translations of this passage have arisen. One takes ‘oferhígian’ as meaning ‘to exceed,’ and, inserting ‘hord’ after ‘gehwon,’ renders: The treasure may easily, the gold in the ground, exceed in value every hoard of man, hide it who will. The other takes ‘oferhígian’ as meaning ‘to render arrogant,’ and, giving the sentence a moralizing tone, renders substantially as in the body of this work. (Cf. 28 13 et seq.)

[2] The passage beginning here is very much disputed. ‘The bill of the old lord’ is by some regarded as Beowulf’s sword; by others, as that of the ancient possessor of the hoard. ‘Ær gescód’ (2778), translated in this work as verb and adverb, is by some regarded as a compound participial adj. = sheathed in brass.

XXXIX.

THE DEAD FOES.—WIGLAF’S BITTER TAUNTS.
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, harressed 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 dragon has plundered his last hoard.

Few warriors dared to face the monster.

Wiglaf is ready to excoriate them.

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

The cowardly thanes come out of the thicket.

They are ashamed of their desertion.

Wiglaf is ready to excoriate them.

Few warriors dared to face the monster.

Wiglaf is ready to excoriate them.

Wiglaf is ready to excoriate them.
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
Surely our lord wasted his armor on poltroons.

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
He, however, got along without you
Helping my kinsman (my strength overtaxing):
To give him in battle, and I ’gan, notwithstanding,
With some aid, I could have saved our liegelord

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

What is life without honor?

The messenger

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:

The messenger sends the news of Beowulf’s death to liegemen near by.
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, 1
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 overmight ’complished
That the mail-clad warrior must sink in the battle,
Fell ’mid his folk-troop: no fret-gems presented
The atheling to earlmen; aye was denied us
Merewing’s mercy. The men of the Swedelands
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.

1 ‘Hige-méðum’ (2910) is glossed by H. as dat. plu. (= for the dead). S.
proposes ‘hige-mé∂e,’ nom. sing. limiting Wigláf; i.e. W. mood-weary,
holds head-watch o’er friend and foe.—B. suggests taking the word as dat.
inst. plu. of an abstract noun in -’u.’ The translation would be substantially
XLI.

THE MESSENGER’S RETROSPECT.

“The blood-stainèd trace of Swedes and Geatmen, 
The death-rush of warmen, widely was noticed, 
How the folks with each other feud did awaken.
The worthy one went then1 with well-beloved 
comrades,

5 Old and dejected to go to the fastness, 
Ongentheo earl upward then turned him; 
Of Higelac’s battle he’d heard on inquiry, 
The exultant one’s prowess, despaired of resistance, 
With earls of the ocean to be able to struggle,

10 ’Gainst sea-going sailors to save the hoard-treasure, 
His wife and his children; he fled after thenceward 
Old ’neath the earth-wall. Then was offered pursuance 
To the braves of the Swedemen, the banner2 to Higelac.

[100] They fare then forth o’er the field-of-protection,

15 When the Hrethling heroes hedgeward had thronged them. 
Then with edges of irons was Ongentheow driven, 
The gray-haired to tarry, that the troop-ruler had to 
Suffer the power solely of Eofor:

Wulf then wildly with weapon assaulted him,

20 Wonred his son, that for swinge of the edges 
The blood from his body burst out in currents, 
Forth ’neath his hair. He feared not however, 
Gray-headed Scylfing, but speedily quited 
The wasting wound-stroke with worse exchange, 
When the king of the thane-troop thither did turn 
him:

The wise-mooded son of Wonred was powerless 
To give a return-blow to the age-hoary man, 
But his head-shielding helmet first hewed he to pieces, 
That flecked with gore perforce he did totter,

30 Fell to the earth; not fey was he yet then, 
But up did he spring though an edge-wound had reached him. 
Then Higelac’s vassal, valiant and dauntless, 
When his brother lay dead, made his broad-bladed 
weapon,

Giant-sword ancient, defence of the giants, 

35 Bound o’er the shield-wall; the folk-prince succumbed then,
Shepherd of people, was pierced to the vitals.

The messenger continues, and 
refers to the 
feuds of Swedes 
and Geats.
There were many attendants who bound up his kinsman,
Carried him quickly when occasion was granted
That the place of the slain they were suffered to manage.

40 This pending, one hero plundered the other,
His armor of iron from Ongentheow ravished,
His hard-sword hilted and helmet together;
The old one’s equipments he carried to Higelac.
He the jewels received, and rewards ’mid the troopers
Eofor takes the old king’s war-gear to Higelac.

45 Graciously promised, and so did accomplish:
The king of the Weders required the war-rush,
Hrethel’s descendant, when home he repaired him,
To Eofor and Wulf with wide-lavished treasures,
To each of them granted a hundred of thousands
Higelac rewards the brothers.

50 In land and rings wrought out of wire:
None upon mid-earth needed to twit him
With the gifts he gave them, when glory they conquered;
And to Eofor then gave he his one only daughter,
The honor of home, as an earnest of favor.
To Eofor he also gives his only daughter in marriage.

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

The anger of earthmen, that earls of the Swedemen
Will visit on us, when they hear that our leader
Lifeless is lying, he who longtime protected
His hoard and kingdom ’gainst hating assailers,
Who on the fall of the heroes defended of yore
The deed-mighty Scyldings, did for the troopers
What best did avail them, and further moreover
Hero-deeds ’complished. 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
It is time for us to pay the last marks of respect to our lord.

70 Bought with his life; these fire shall devour,
Flame shall cover, no earlman shall wear
A jewel-memento, nor beautiful virgin
Have on her neck rings to adorn her,
But wretched in spirit bereaved of gold-gems

75 She shall oft with others be exiled and banished,
Since the leader of liegemen hath laughter forsaken,
Mirth and merriment. Hence many a war-spear
Cold from the morning shall be clutched in the fingers,
Heaved in the hand, no harp-music’s sound shall

80 Waken the warriors, but the wan-coated raven
Fain over fey ones freely shall gabble,
Shall say to the eagle how he speed in the eating,
When, the wolf his companion, he plundered the slain.”
So the high-minded hero was rehearsing these stories

85
Loathsome to hear; he lied as to few of
Weirds and of words. All the war-troop arose then,
'Neath the Eagle’s Cape sadly betook them,
Weeping and woful, the wonder to look at.
They saw on the sand then soulless a-lying,

90
His slaughter-bed holding, him who rings had given them
In days that were done; then the death-bringing moment
Was come to the good one, that the king very warlike,
Wielder of Weders, with wonder-death perished.
First they beheld there a creature more wondrous,

95
The worm on the field, in front of them lying,
The foeman before them: the fire-spewing dragon,
Ghostly and grisly guest in his terrors,
Was scorched in the fire; as he lay there he measured
Fifty of feet; came forth in the night-time

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,

100
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,
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

105
(He is earth-folk’s protector) to open the treasure,
E’en to such among mortals as seemed to Him proper.

The warriors go sadly to look at Beowulf’s lifeless body.
They also see the dragon.

The hoard was under a magic spell.
God alone could give access to it.

[1] For ‘góda,’ which seems a surprising epithet for a Geat to apply to the “terrible” Ongentheow, B. suggests ‘gomela.’ The passage would then stand: ‘The old one went then,’ etc.

[2] For ‘segn Higeláce,’ K., Th., and B. propose ‘segn Higeláces,’ meaning: Higelac’s banner followed the Swedes (in pursuit).—S. suggests ‘sæce Higeláces,’ and renders: Higelac’s pursuit.—The H.-So. reading, as translated in our text, means that the banner of the enemy was captured and brought to Higelac as a trophy.

[3] The rendering given in this translation represents the king as being generous beyond the possibility of reproach; but some authorities construe ‘him’ (2996) as plu., and understand the passage to mean that no one reproached the two brothers with having received more reward than they were entitled to.

[4] The name ‘Scyldingas’ here (3006) has caused much discussion, and given rise to several theories, the most important of which are as follows: (1)
After the downfall of Hrothgar’s family, Beowulf was king of the Danes, or Scyldings. (2) For ‘Scyldingas’ read ‘Scylfingas’—that is, after killing Eadgils, the Scylfing prince, Beowulf conquered his land, and held it in subjection. (3) M. considers 3006 a thoughtless repetition of 2053. (Cf. H.-So.)

[5] B. takes ‘nihtes’ and ‘hwílum’ (3045) as separate adverbial cases, and renders: Joy in the air had he of yore by night, etc. He thinks that the idea of vanished time ought to be expressed.

[6] The parenthesis is by some emended so as to read: (1) (He (i.e. God) is the hope of men); (2) (he is the hope of heroes). Gr.’s reading has no parenthesis, but says: … could touch, unless God himself, true king of victories, gave to whom he would to open the treasure, the secret place of enchanters, etc. The last is rejected on many grounds.

XLII.

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

Then ’twas seen that the journey prospered him little
Who wrongly within had the ornaments hidden
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 ’rol’d 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 wain was uploaded,
A mass unmeasured, the men-leader off then,
The hero hoary, to Whale’s-Ness was carried.

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

[2] The passage ‘Wundur … búan’ (3063-3066), M. took to be a question asking whether it was strange that a man should die when his appointed time had come.—B. sees a corruption, and makes emendations introducing the idea that a brave man should not die from sickness or from old age, but should find death in the performance of some deed of daring.—S. sees an indirect question introduced by ‘hwár’ and dependent upon ‘wundur’: A secret is it when the hero is to die, etc.—Why may the two clauses not be parallel, and the whole passage an Old English cry of ‘How wonderful is death!’?—S.’s is the best yet offered, if ‘wundor’ means ‘mystery.’

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

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

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

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

[7] C. proposes to take ‘weaxan’ = L. ‘vescor,’ and translate devour. This gives a parallel to ‘fretan’ above. The parenthesis would be discarded and the passage read: Now shall the fire consume, the wan-flame devour, the prince of warriors, etc.

XLIII.

THE BURNING OF BEOWULF.

The folk of the Geatmen got him 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
The largest of dead-fires: dark o’er the vapor
The smoke-cloud ascended, the sad-roaring fire,
Mingled with weeping (the wind-roar subsided)
Till the building of bone it had broken to pieces,
Hot in the heart. Heavy in spirit
They mood-sad lamented the men-leader’s ruin;
And mournful measures the much-grieving widow

15 * * * * * * *
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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,
25 In ten-days’ space, with a wall surrounded it,
As wisest of world-folk could most worthily plan it.
They placed in the barrow rings and jewels,

All such ornaments as erst in the treasure
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,

35 More would they mourn, lament for their ruler,
Speak in measure, mention him with pleasure,
Weighed his worth, and his warlike achievements
Mightily commended, as ’tis meet one praise his
Liegelord in words and love him in spirit,

30 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,
40 Friendliest to folk-troops and fondest of honor.

ADDENDA.

Several discrepancies and other oversights have been noticed in the H.-So. glossary. Of these a good part were avoided by Harrison and Sharp, the American editors of Beowulf, in their last edition, 1888. The rest will, I hope, be noticed in their fourth edition. As, however, this book may fall into the hands of some who have no copy of the American edition, it seems best to notice all the principal oversights of the German editors.

From hám (194).—Notes and glossary conflict; the latter not having been altered to suit the conclusions accepted in the former.

Þær gelýfan sceal dryhtnes dóme (440).—Under ‘dóm’ H. says ‘the might of the Lord’; while under ‘gelýfan’ he says ‘the judgment of the Lord.’

Eal bencþelu (486).—Under ‘benc-þelu’ H. says nom. plu.; while under
‘eal’ he says nom. sing.

**Heatho-remas** (519).—Under ‘ætberan’ H. translates ‘to the Heathoremes’; while under ‘Heatho-remas’ he says ‘Heathoræmas reaches Breca in the swimming-match with Beowulf.’ Harrison and Sharp (3d edition, 1888) avoid the discrepancy.

**Fäh féond-scaða** (554).—Under ‘féond-scaða’ H. says ‘a gleaming sea-monster’; under ‘fäh’ he says ‘hostile.’

**Onfeng hraële inwit-þancum** (749).—Under ‘onfón’ H. says ‘he received the maliciously-disposed one’; under ‘inwit-þanc’ he says ‘he grasped,’ etc.

**Nið-wundor séon** (1366).—Under ‘nið-wundor’ H. calls this word itself nom. sing.; under ‘séon’ he translates it as accus. sing., understanding ‘man’ as subject of ‘séon.’ H. and S. (3d edition) make the correction.

**Forgeaf hilde-bille** (1521).—H., under the second word, calls it instr. dat.; while under ‘forgifan’ he makes it the dat. of indir. obj. H. and S. (3d edition) make the change.

**Brád and brún-ecg** (1547).—Under ‘brád’ H. says ‘das breite Hüftmesser mit bronzener Klinge’; under ‘brún-ecg’ he says ‘ihr breites Hüftmesser mit blitzender Klinge.’

**Yðellic** (1557).—Under this word H. makes it modify ‘ástód.’ If this be right, the punctuation of the fifth edition is wrong. See H. and S., appendix.

**Sélran gesóhte** (1840).—Under ‘sél’ and ‘gesécan’ H. calls these two words accus. plu.; but this is clearly an error, as both are nom. plu., pred. nom. H. and S. correct under ‘sél.’

**Wið sylfne** (1978).—Under ‘wið’ and ‘gesittan’ H. says ‘wið = near, by’; under ‘self’ he says ‘opposite.’

**þéow** (2225) is omitted from the glossary.

**For duguðum** (2502).—Under ‘duguð’ H. translates this phrase, ‘in Tüchtigkeit’; under ‘for,’ by ‘vor der edlen Kriegerschaar.’

**þær** (2574).—Under ‘wealdan’ H. translates þær by ‘wo’; under ‘mótan,’ by ’da.’ H. and S. suggest ‘if’ in both passages.

**Wunde** (2726).—Under ‘wund’ H. says ‘dative,’ and under ‘wæl-bléate’ he says ‘accus.’ It is without doubt accus., parallel with ‘benne.’

**Strengum gebæded** (3118).—Under ‘strengo’ H. says ‘Strengum’ = mit Macht; under ‘gebæded’ he translates ‘von den Sehnen.’ H. and S. correct this discrepancy by rejecting the second reading.

**Bronda be láfe** (3162).—A recent emendation. The fourth edition had ‘bronda betost.’ In the fifth edition the editor neglects to change the glossary to suit the new emendation. See ‘bewyrcan.’
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