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OLD ENGLISH POEMS

TRANSLATED INTO THE ORIGINAL METER

TOGETHER WITH
SHORT SELECTIONS FROM OLD ENGLISH PROSE

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These selections from Old English poetry have been translated to meet the needs of that ever-increasing body of students who cannot read the poems in their original form, but who wish nevertheless to enjoy to some extent the heritage of verse which our early English ancestors have left for us. Especially in the rapid survey of English literature given in most of our colleges, a collection of translations covering the Anglo-Saxon period and reflecting the form and spirit of the original poems should add much to a fuller appreciation of the varied and rich, though uneven, literary output of our earliest singers.

In subject-matter these Old English poems are full of the keenest interest to students of history, of customs, of legend, of folk-lore, and of art. They form a truly national literature; so that one who has read them all has learned much not only of the life of the early English, but of the feelings that inspired these folk, of their hopes, their fears, and their superstitions, of their whole outlook on life. They took their poetry seriously, as they did everything about them, and often in spite of crudity of expression, of narrow vision, and of conventionalized modes of speech, this very "high seriousness" raises an otherwise mediocre poem to the level of real literature. Whatever may be said of the limitations of Old English poetry, of its lack of humor, of the narrow range of its [6] sentiments, of the imitativeness of many of its most representative specimens, it cannot be denied the name of real literature; for it is the direct expression of the civilization that gave it birth—a civilization that we must understand if we are to appreciate the characteristics of its more important descendants of our own time.

Although the contents of these poems can be satisfactorily studied in any translation, the effect of the peculiar meter that reinforces the stirring spirit of Old English poetry is lost unless an attempt is made to reproduce this metrical form in the modern English rendering. The possibility of retaining the original meter in an adequate translation was formerly the subject of much debate, but since Professor Gummere's excellent version of *Beowulf* and the minor epic poems,^[4] and other recent successful translations of poems in the Old English meter, there can be no question of the possibility of putting Anglo-Saxon poems into readable English verse that reproduces in large measure the effect of the original. To do this for the principal Old English poems, with the exception of *Beowulf*, is the purpose of the present volume.

Except for the subtlest distinctions between the types of half verse, strict Old English rules for the alliterative meter have been adhered to. These rules may be stated as follows:

1. The lines are divided into two half-lines, the division being indicated by a space in the middle. [7]
2. The half-lines consist of two accented and a varying number of unaccented syllables. Each half-line contains at least four syllables. Occasional half-lines are lengthened to three accented syllables, possibly for the purpose of producing an effect of solemnity.
3. The two half-lines are bound together by beginning-rime or alliteration; *i.e.*, an agreement in sound between the beginning letters of any accented syllables in the line. For example, in the line

Guthere there *g*ave me a *g*oodly jewel

the *g*'s form the alliteration. The third accent sets the alliteration for the line and is known as the "rime-giver." With it agree the first and the second accent, or either of them. The fourth accent must not, however, agree with the rime-giver. Occasionally the first and third accents will alliterate together and the second and fourth, as,

The *w*ear^y in *h*ear^t against *W*yr^d has no *h*elp;

or the first and fourth may have the alliteration on one letter, while the second and third have it on another, as,

Then *h*eav^yer *g*row^s the *g*rief of his *h*ear^t.

These two latter forms are somewhat unusual. The standard line is that given above:

Guthere there *g*ave me a *g*oodly jewel,

or [8]

A *h*undred generatⁱons; *h*oary and stained with red,

or

With rings of *g*old and *g*ilded cups.

All consonants alliterate with themselves, though usually *sh*, *sp*, and *st* agree only with the same combination. Vowels alliterate with one another.

In the following passage the alliterating letters are indicated by italics:

Then a *b*and of *b*old knights *b*usily gathered,
Keen men at the *c*onflict; with *c*ourage they stepped forth,
Bearing *b*anners, *b*rave-hearted companions,
And *f*ared to the *f*ight, *f*orth in right order,
Heroes under *h*elmets from the *h*oly city
At the *d*awning of *d*ay; *d*inned forth their shields
A *l*oud-voiced *a*larm. Now *l*istened in joy
The lank wolf in the *w*ood and the wan raven,
Battle-hungry *b*ird, *b*oth knowing well
That the *g*allant people would *g*ive them soon

A feast on the fated; now flew on their track
The deadly devourer, the dewy-winged eagle,
Singing his war song, the swart-coated bird,
The horned of beak.

[Judith](#), vv. 199-212.

Besides the distinctive meter in which the Old English poems are written, there are several qualities of style [9] for which they are peculiar. No one can read a page of these poems without being struck by the parallel structure that permeates the whole body of Old English verse. Expressions are changed slightly and repeated from a new point of view, sometimes with a good effect but quite as often to the detriment of the lines. These parallelisms have been retained in the translation in so far as it has been possible, but sometimes the lack of inflectional endings in English has prevented their literal translation.

Accompanying these parallelisms, and often a part of them, are the frequent synonyms so characteristic of Old English poetry. These synonymous expressions are known as "kennings." They are not to be thought of as occasional metaphors employed at the whim of the poet; they had, in most cases, already received a conventional meaning. Thus the king was always spoken of as "ring giver," "protector of earls," or "bracelet bestower." The queen was the "weaver of peace"; the sea the "ship road," or "whale path," or "gannet's bath."

Old English poetry is conventionalized to a remarkable degree. Even those aspects of nature that the poets evidently enjoyed are often described in the most conventional of words and phrases. More than half of so fine a poem as [The Battle of Brunanburg](#) is taken bodily from other poems. No description of a battle was complete without a picture of the birds of prey hovering over the field. Heroes were always assembling for banquets and receiving rewards of rings at the hand of the king. These conventional phrases and situations, added to a [10] thorough knowledge of a large number of old Germanic myths, constituted a great part of the equipment of the typical Old English minstrel or scop, such as one finds described in [Widsith](#) or [Deor's Lament](#).

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the poems are convention and nothing more. A sympathetic reading will undoubtedly show many high poetic qualities. Serious and grave these poems always are, but they do express certain of the darker moods with a sincerity and power that is far from commonplace. At times they give vivid glimpses of the spirit of man under the blighting influence of the "dark ages." After reading these poems, we come to understand better the pessimistic mood of the author of [The Wanderer](#) when he says,

All on earth is irksome to man.

And we see how the winsome meadows of the land of the [Phoenix](#) must by their contrast have delighted the souls of men who were harassed on every side as our ancestors were.

All of these distinguishing features of Old English poetry—the regular alliterative meter, the frequent parallelisms, the "kennings," and the general dark outlook on life will be found illustrated in the poems selected in this book. They cover the entire period of Old English literature and embrace every "school."

The order in which the poems are printed is in no sense original, but is that followed in most standard [11] textbooks. Naturally such artificial divisions as "Pagan" and "Christian" are inexact. The "pagan" poems are only *largely* pagan; the "Christian" predominately Christian. On the whole, the grouping is perhaps accurate enough for practical purposes, and the conformity to existing textbooks makes the volume convenient for those who wish to use it to supplement these books.

In addition to the poems, four short prose passages referred to by most historians of the literature have been included so as to add to the usefulness of the volume.

In the translation of the poems the original meaning and word-order has been kept as nearly as modern English idiom and the exigencies of the meter would allow. Nowhere, we believe, has the possibility of an attractive alliteration caused violence to be done to the sense of the poem.

The best diction to be used in such a translation is difficult to determine. The temptation is ever present to use the modern English descendant of the Anglo-Saxon word, even when it is very archaic in flavor. This tendency has been resisted, for it was desired to reproduce the effect of the original; and, though Old English poetry was conventional, it was probably not archaic: it was not out of date at the time it was written. Since the diction of these poems was usually very simple, it has been the policy of the translators to exclude all sophisticated expressions, and to retain words of Germanic origin or simple words of Latin derivation that do not suggest [12] subtleties foreign to the mind of the Old English poet.

The texts used as a standard for translation are indicated in the introductory notes to the different poems. Whenever a good critical edition of a poem has been available, it has been followed. Variations from the readings used in these texts are usually indicated where they are of any importance. In the punctuation and paragraphing of the poems, the varying usage of the different editors has been disregarded and a uniform practice adopted throughout.

Following these principles, the translators have attempted to reproduce for modern English readers the meaning and movement of the Old English originals. It is their earnest hope that something of the fine spirit that breathes through much of this poetry will be found to remain in the translation.

COSETTE FAUST.
STITH THOMPSON.

I. PAGAN POETRY

1. EPIC OR HEROIC GROUP

WIDSITH

[Critical edition: R. W. Chambers, *Widsith: a Study in Old English Heroic Legend*. Cambridge, 1912.

Date: Probably late sixth or early seventh century.

Alliterative translation: Gummere, *Oldest English Epic* (1910), p. 191.

“Widsith—‘Farway’—the ideal wandering minstrel, tells of all the tribes among whom he has sojourned, of all the chieftains he has known. The first English students of the poem regarded it as autobiographical, as the actual record of his wanderings written by a *scop*; and were inclined to dismiss as interpolations passages mentioning princes whom it was chronologically impossible for a man who had met Ermanric to have known. This view was reduced to an absurdity by Haigh.

.....

“The more we study the growth of German heroic tradition, the more clear does it become that *Widsith* and *Deor* reflect that tradition. They are not the actual outpourings of actual poets at the court of Ermanric or the Heodenings. What the poems sung in the court of Ermanric were like we shall never know: but we can safely say that they were unlike *Widsith*.... The Traveller’s tale is a fantasy of some man, keenly interested in the old stories, who depicts an ideal wandering singer, and makes him move hither and thither among the tribes and the heroes whose stories he loves. In the names of its chiefs, in the names of its tribes, and above all in its spirit, *Widsith* reflects the heroic age of the migrations, an age which had hardly begun in the days of Ermanric.”—Chambers, p. 4.

Lines 75, 82-84 are almost certainly interpolated. With these rejected “the poem leaves upon us,” says Chambers, “a very definite impression. It is a catalogue of the tribes and heroes of Germany, and many of these heroes, though they may have been half legendary already to the writer of the poem, are historic characters who can be dated with accuracy.”]

NOTE.—In the footnotes, no attempt is made to discuss peoples or persons mentioned in this poem unless they are definitely known and are of importance for an understanding of the meaning of the lines.

Widsith now spoke, his word-hoard unlocked, [16]
He who traveled the widest among tribes of men,
Farthest among folk: on the floor he received
The rarest of gifts. From the race of the [Myrgings](#)
⁵ His ancestors sprang. With [Ealhild](#) the gracious,
The fair framer of peace, for the first time
He sought the home of the [Hræda king](#),
From the [Angles](#) in the East —of [Eormanric](#),
Fell and faithless. Freely he spoke forth:
¹⁰ “Many a royal ruler of a realm I have known;
[Every leader should live](#) a life of virtue;
One earl after the other shall order his land,
He who wishes and works for the weal of his throne!
Of these for a while was [Hwala](#) the best,
¹⁵ But [Alexander](#) of all of men [17]
Was most famous of lords, and he flourished the most
Of all the earls whom on earth I have known.
Attila ruled the Huns, Eormanric the Goths,
[Becca the Banings](#), the Burgundians Gifca.
²⁰ [Cæsar](#) ruled the Greeks and Cælic the Finns,
[Hagena](#) the Holm-Rugians and [Heoden](#) the Glommas.
Witta ruled the Swabians, [Wada](#) the Hælsings, [18]
Meaca the Myrgings, Mearchealf the Hundings,
[Theodoric](#) ruled the Franks, Thyle the Rondings,
²⁵ [Breoca](#) the Brondings, Billing the Wernas.
Oswine ruled the Eowas and the Ytas Gefwulf;
[Finn Folcwalding](#) ruled the Frisian people.
Sigehere ruled longest the Sea-Dane’s kingdom.
Hnæf ruled the Hocings, Helm the Wulfings,
³⁰ Wald the Woings, Wod the [Thuringians](#),
Sæferth the [Secgans](#), the Swedes [Ongentheow](#).
Scaefthere ruled the Ymbrians, Sceafa the [Lombards](#),
Hun the Hætweras and Holen the Wrosnas.
Hringweald was called the king of the pirates.
³⁵ [Offa](#) ruled the Angles, Alewih the Danes:
Among these men he was mightiest of all, [19]
But he equalled not Offa in earl-like deeds.
For Offa by arms while only a child,

First among fighters won the fairest of kingdoms;
 40 Not any of his age in earlship surpassed him.
 In a single combat in the siege of battle
 He fixed the frontier at Fifeldore
 Against the host of the Myrgings, which was held thenceforth
 By Angles and [Swabians](#) as Offa had marked it.
 45 [Hrothwulf and Hrothgar](#) held for a long time
 A neighborly compact, the nephew and uncle,
 After they had vanquished the Viking races
 And Ingeld's array was overridden,
 Hewed down at Heorot the Heathobard troop.
 50 So forth I fared in foreign lands
 All over the earth; of evil and good
 There I made trial, torn from my people;
 Far from my folk I have followed my travels.
 Therefore I sing the song of my wanderings,
 55 Declare before the company in the crowded mead-hall,
 How gifts have been given me by the great men of earth. [20]
 I was with the Huns and with the [Hræda-Goths](#),
 With the Swedes and with the [Geats](#) and with the southern Danes,
 With the Wenlas I was and with the Vikings and with the Wærna folk.
 60 With the [Gepidæ](#) I was and with the [Wends](#) and with the Gefligas.
 With the [Angles](#) I was and with the Swæfe and with the Ænenas.
 With the [Saxons](#) I was and with the Secgans and with the Suardones.
 With the Hronas I was and with the Deanas and with the [Heatho-Raemas](#).
 With the Thuringians I was and with the Throwendas;
 65 And with the [Burgundians](#), where a bracelet was given me.
[Guthhere](#) there gave me a goodly jewel,
 As reward for my song: not slothful that king! [21]
 With the [Franks I was and with the Frisians](#) and with the Frumtingas.
 With the [Rugians I was and with the Glommas](#) and with the Roman strangers.
 70 Likewise in Italy with [Ælfwine](#) I was:
 He had, as I have heard, a hand the readiest
 For praiseworthy deeds of prowess and daring;
 With liberal heart he lavished his treasures,
 Shining armlets—the son of Eadwine.
 75 [I was with the Saracens](#) and with the [Serings](#);
 With the Greeks I was and with the Finns and with far-famed Cæsar,
 Who sat in rule over the cities of revelry—
 Over the riches and wealth of the realm of the [Welsh](#).
 With the Scots I was and with the Picts and with the [Scride-Finns](#).
 80 With the [Lidwicingas](#) I was and with the Leonas and with the Longobards, [22]
 With the Hæthnas and with the Hærethas and with the [Hundings](#);
 With the Israelites I was and with the Assyrians,
 And with the Hebrews and with the Egyptians and with the Hindus I was,
 With the Medes I was and with the Persians and with the Myrging folk,
 85 And with the Mofdings I was and against the Myrging band,
 And with the Amothingians. With the [East Thuringians](#) I was
 And with the Eolas and with the [Istians](#) and with the Idumingas.
 And I was with [Eormanric](#) all of the time;
 There the king of the Goths gave me in honor
 90 The choicest of bracelets—the chief of the burghers—
 On which were six hundred pieces of precious gold,
 Of shining metal in shillings counted;
 I gave over this armlet to [Eadgils](#) then,
 To my kind protector when I came to my home,
 95 To my beloved prince, the lord of the Myrgings, [23]
 Who gave me the land that was left by my father;
 And [Ealhild](#) then also another ring gave me,
 Queen of the doughty ones, the daughter of Eadwine.
 Her praise has passed to all parts of the world,
 100 Wherever in song I sought to tell
 Where I knew under heavens the noblest of queens,
 Golden-adorned, giving forth treasures.
 Then in company with Scilling, in clear ringing voice
 'Fore our beloved lord I uplifted my song;
 105 Loudly the harp in harmony sounded;
 Then many men with minds discerning
 Spoke of our lay in unsparing praise,
 That they never had heard a nobler song.
 Then I roamed through all the realm of the Goths;
 110 Unceasing I sought the surest of friends,
 The crowd of comrades of the court of Eormanric.
 Hethca sought I and Beadeca and the Harlungas,
[Emerca](#) sought I and Fridla and East-Gota,

Sage and noble, the sire of Unwen.
¹¹⁵ Secca sought I and [Becca](#), Seafola and Theodoric,
 Heathoric and [Sifeca](#), Hlith and Incgentheow. [24]
[Eadwine sought I and Elsa](#) Ægelmund and Hungar
 And the worthy troop of the With-Myrgings.
[Wulfhere sought I and Wyrmhære](#): there war was seldom lacking
¹²⁰ When the host of the [Hrædas](#) with hardened swords
 Must wage their wars [by the woods of Vistula](#)
 To hold their homes from the hordes of Attila.
 Rædhere sought I and Rondhere, Rumstan and Gislhere,
 Withergield and Freotheric, [Wudga and Hama](#):
¹²⁵ These warriors were not the worst of comrades,
 Though their names at the last of my list are numbered.
 Full oft from that host the hissing spear
 Fiercely flew on the foemen's troopers.
 There the wretches ruled with royal treasure,
¹³⁰ [Wudga and Hama](#), over women and men.
 So I ever have found as I fared among men
 That in all the land most beloved is he
 To whom God giveth a goodly kingdom [25]
 To hold as long as he liveth here.
¹³⁵ [Thus wandering widely](#) through the world there go
 Minstrels of men through many lands,
 Express their needs and speak their thanks.
 Ever south and north some one they meet
 Skillful in song who scatters gifts,
¹⁴⁰ To further his fame before his chieftains,
 To do deeds of honor, till all shall depart,
 Light and life together: lasting praise he gains,
 And has under heaven the highest of honor.

[4. Myrging](#). Nothing is known with any degree of certainty about this tribe. Chambers concludes that they dwelt south of the River Eider, which is the present boundary between Schleswig and Holstein, and that they belonged to the Suevic stock of peoples. See [vv. 84, 85, below](#).

[5. Ealhild](#). See notes to [vv. 8](#) and [97](#), below. Much discussion has taken place as to who Ealhild was. Summing up his lengthy discussion, Chambers says (*Widsith*, p. 28): "For these reasons it seems best to regard Ealhild as the murdered wife of Eormanric, the Anglian equivalent of the Gothic Sunilda and the Northern Swanhild."

[7. Hræda king](#). That is, the Gothic king.

[8. Angles](#). One of the Low Germanic tribes that later settled in Britain, and from whom the name England is derived. Their original home was in the modern Schleswig-Holstein. *Eormanric*. See [v. 88, below](#), and [Deor's Lament, v. 21](#). He was a king of the Goths. After his death, about 375 A.D., he came to be known as the typical bad king, covetous, fierce, and cruel. According to the Scandinavian form of the story, the king sends his son and a treacherous councillor, Bikki (the Becca of [v. 19](#)) to woo and bring to the court the maiden Swanhild. Bikki urges the son to woo her for himself and then betrays him to his father, who has him hanged and causes Swanhild to be trampled to death by horses. Her brothers revenge her death and wound the king. At this juncture the Huns attack him, and during the attack Eormanric dies.

[11](#). The proverb, or "gnomic verse," is very common in Old English poetry.

[14. Hwala](#) appears in the West Saxon genealogies as son of Beowi, son of Scaef (see *Beowulf*, vv. 4, 18).

[15. Alexander \[the Great\]](#). The writer speaks of many celebrities who were obviously too early for him to know personally. This passage is usually considered to be an interpolation.

[18. Becca](#). See [note to v. 8](#). The *Banings* are not definitely identified. The *Burgundians* were originally an East Germanic tribe. During the second and third centuries they were neighbors of the Goths and lived in the modern Posen. Later they moved west, and finally threatened Gaul, where in the middle of the fifth century they were defeated by the Roman general, Aetius. Shortly afterward they were defeated by the Huns. The remnant settled in Savoy, where they gradually recovered, and by the middle of the sixth century became an important nation. *Gifca* (or *Gibica*) was traditionally spoken of as an early king who ruled over the Burgundians while they were still in the east, living as neighbors of the Goths on the Vistula.

[20. Cæsar](#), was the name given to the Emperor of the East—the "Greek Emperor." The Finns were at that time located in their present home in Finland.

[21, 22. Hagena, Heoden, Wada](#). These heroes all belong to one myth-cycle, which was told in Europe for many centuries. It is difficult to reconstruct the story as it was known at the time *Widsith* was written, for it has received many additions at the hands of subsequent writers. The essential parts of the tale seem to be these: Heoden asks his servant, the sweet-singing Heorrenda, for help in wooing Hild, the daughter of Hagena. Heorrenda, enlisting the services of Wada, the renowned sea-monster (or sea-god) goes to woo Hild. By means of Wada's frightful appearance and skill in swordsmanship they attract Hild's attention, and Heorrenda then sings so that the birds are shamed into silence. They then woo Hild and flee with her from her father's court. Hagena pursues, and Heoden, after marrying Hild, engages him in battle. Each evening Hild goes to the battlefield and by magic awakens the warriors who have fallen, and they fight the same battle over day after day without ceasing. *Heorrenda*, the sweet singer of the Heodenings (i.e., of the court of Heoden) is mentioned in *Deor's Lament*, vv. [36 and 39](#). *Wada* is a widely-known legendary character. He had power over the sea. He was the father of Weland, the Vulcan of Norse myth (see *Deor's Lament*, and [Waldhere, A, v. 2](#)). The *Holm-Rugians* and the *Hælsings* were in the fourth century on the Baltic coast of Germany. The *Glommas*

are unknown.

[24.](#) *Theodoric*, son of Chlodowech, king of the Franks, is meant, and not the famous Gothic king. Cf. [v. 115, below](#).

[25.](#) *Breoca*: the same as Breca, prince of the Brondings, the opponent of Beowulf in his famous swimming match (*Beowulf*, vv. 499-606).

[27, 28.](#) *Finn Folcwalding* was the traditional hero of the Frisians. For fragments of the stories connected with him, see *Beowulf*, vv. 1068-1159, and the fragmentary poem, *The Fight at Finnsburg* ([p. 34, below](#)). *Hnæf*, son of Hoc (hence ruler of the *Hocings*) also figures in the Finn story. *Hnæf*'s sister marries Finn. For a summary of the story see the Introduction to *The Fight at Finnsburg*.

[30.](#) *Thuringians*. These people dwelt near the mouths of the Rhine and the Maas.

[31.](#) *Ongentheow*, the king of Sweden, is frequently mentioned in *Beowulf* (e.g., vv. 2476 and 2783). *The Secgans* are unknown, but they are mentioned in [v. 62, below](#), and in [The Fight at Finnsburg, v. 26](#).

[32.](#) The ancient home of the *Longobards* (or Lombards) was between the Baltic and the Elbe.

[35.](#) *Offa*: a legendary king of the Angles, while they still lived on the continent toward the end of the fourth century. Legends of him are found in Denmark and in England. Chambers concludes that the Danish form is perhaps very near that known to the author of *Widsith*. *Offa*, the son of the king, though a giant in stature, is dumb from his youth, and when the German prince from the south challenges the aged king to send a champion to defend his realm in single combat, *Offa*'s speech is restored and he goes to the combat. The fight was held at Fife-dore, the River Eider, which was along the frontier between the Germans and the Danes. Here *Offa* fought against two champions and defeated them both, thus establishing the frontier for many years. Note that the author of *Widsith*, who is of the Myrging race, is here celebrating the defeat of his own people.

[44.](#) *Swabians* probably refers to the Myrgings, who were of the stock of the Suevi.

[45.](#) *Hrothwulf and Hrothgar*. See *Beowulf*, vv. 1017 and 1181 ff. *Hrothgar* is *Hrothwulf*'s uncle, and they live on friendly terms at Heorot (*Hrothgar*'s hall). Later it seems that *Hrothwulf* fails to perform his duties as the guardian of *Hrothgar*'s son, thus bringing to an end his years of friendliness to *Hrothgar* and his sons. The fight referred to is against *Ingeld*, *Hrothgar*'s son-in-law who invaded the Danish kingdom. (See *Beowulf*, vv. 84, 2024 ff.)

[57.](#) See [v. 18, above](#).

[58.](#) The *Geats* were probably settled in southern Sweden. They were the tribe to which *Beowulf* belonged.

[60.](#) The *Gepidæ* were closely related to the Goths and were originally located near them at the mouth of the Vistula River. The *Wends* were a Slavonic tribe who finally pressed up into the lands vacated in the great migrations by the Germans between the Elbe and the Vistula.

[61.](#) *Angles*. See [vv. 8](#) and [44](#), above. *Swæfe*. See [line 44, above](#).

[62.](#) The *Saxons*, who with the Angles and Jutes settled Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries, lived originally near the mouth of the Elbe.

[63.](#) The *Heatho-Raemas* dwelt near the modern Christiania in Norway. See *Beowulf*, line 518, in which *Breca* in the swimming match reaches their land.

[65.](#) *Burgundians*. See [v. 19](#).

[66.](#) *Guthhere* was a ruler of the Burgundians ([v. 19](#)). He was probably at Worms when he gave the jewel to *Widsith*. *Guthhere*, because of his great battle with *Attila* and his tragic defeat, became a great legendary hero. (See [Waldhere, B, v. 14](#).)

[67.](#) The *Franks* and the *Frisians* are spoken of together in *Beowulf* (vv. 1207, 1210, 2917), where they together repulse an attack made by *Hygelac*. The *Frisians* probably dwelt west of the *Zuider Zee*.

[68.](#) The *Rugians* and the *Glommas*. See [note to v. 21](#), above.

[70.](#) *Ælfwine*: (otherwise known as *Alboin*), the Lombard conqueror of Italy. He was the son of *Audoin* (*Eadwine*).

[75-87.](#) Most scholars agree that these lines are interpolated, since they do not fit in with the rest of the poem.

[75.](#) *Serings*: possibly Syrians.

[78.](#) *Welsh*: a term applied to the Romans by the Old English writers.

[79.](#) The *Scride-Finns* were settled in northern Norway—not in Finland, where the main body of Finns were found. They are perhaps to be identified with the modern Lapps.

[80.](#) *Lidwicingas*: the inhabitants of Armorica. *Longobards*. See [v. 32](#).

[81.](#) The *Hundings* are also mentioned in [line 23](#).

[84, 85.](#) *Myrging*. See [line 4](#).

[86. East Thuringians](#). Probably those Thuringians dwelling in the sixth century east of the Elbe.

[87. Istians](#). Probably the Esthonians mentioned in the [Voyage of Wulfstan](#). (See [p. 194, line 151, below](#).) The *Idumingas* were neighbors of the Istians. Both were probably Lettish or Lithuanian tribes.

[88. Eormanric](#). See [note to v. 8](#), above.

[93. Eadgils](#) was king of the Myrgings.

[97. Ealhild](#). See [note to v. 5](#), above. She was (v. 98) daughter of Eadwine, King of the Lombards ([v. 74](#)). The meaning here is not absolutely clear, but Chambers makes a good case for considering her the wife of Eormanric. He thinks that she followed her husband's gift to Widsith by a gift of another ring, in return for which Widsith sings her praises.

[112, 113. Emerca and Fridla](#), the *Harlungas*, were murdered by their uncle, Eormanric. *East-Gota*, or Ostrogotha, the king of the united Goths in the middle of the third century, was a direct ancestor of Eormanric.

[115. Becca](#). See [note to v. 8](#). *Seafola* and *Theodoric*: probably Theodoric of Verona and his retainer, Sabene of Ravenna. On the other hand, the references may be to Theoderic the Frank. (See [v. 24](#).)

[116. Sifeca](#): probably the evil councillor who brought about the murder by Eormanric of his nephews, the Harlungas. (See [vv. 112, 113, note](#).)

[117-119](#). These names are all very obscure.

[120. Hrædas](#): the Goths.

[121](#). The struggle between the Goths and the Huns did not actually occur in the Vistula wood, but after the Goths had left the Vistula.

[124, 130. Wudga and Hama](#). The typical outlaws of German tradition. Hama appears in *Beowulf* (v. 1198) as a fugitive who has stolen the Brising necklace and fled from Eormanric. Wudga, the Widia of *Waldhere* ([B, vv. 4, 9](#)) came finally to be known for his treachery. He was connected with the court of Theodoric and received gifts from him, but he is later represented as having betrayed the king. The traditions about both of these men are badly confused.

[135-143](#). One of the passages that give us a definite impression of the scop, or minstrel, and his life. It serves very well for the conclusion of a poem descriptive of the life of a minstrel.

[26]

DEOR'S LAMENT

[Critical text and translation: Dickins, *Runic and Heroic Poems*, Cambridge University Press, 1915, p. 70.

Alliterative translation: Gummere, *Oldest English Epic* (1910), p. 186.

The metrical arrangement of this poem into strophes with a constant refrain is very unusual in the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, though it is common among their Scandinavian kinsmen. This fact has led some scholars to believe that we have here a translation from the Old Norse. Professor Gummere, however, makes a good case against this assumption.

The first three strophes refer to the widely known story of Weland, or Wayland, the Vulcan of Norse myth. The crafty king, Nithhad, captures Weland, fetters him (according to some accounts, hamstringing him), and robs him of the magic ring that gives him power to fly. Beadohild, Nithhad's daughter, accompanied by her brothers, goes to Weland and has him mend rings for her. In this way he recovers his own ring and his power to fly. Before leaving he kills the sons of Nithhad, and, stupefying Beadohild with liquor, puts her to shame.]

To [Weland](#) came woes and wearisome trial,
And cares oppressed the constant earl;
His lifelong companions were pain and sorrow,
And winter-cold weeping: his ways were oft hard,
5 After Nithhad had struck the strong man low,
Cut the supple sinew-bands of the sorrowful earl.
That has passed over: so this may depart!

[Beadohild](#) bore her brothers' death
Less sorely in soul than herself and her plight
10 When she clearly discovered her cursed condition,
That unwed she should bear a babe to the world.
She never could think of the thing that must happen.
That has passed over: so this may depart!

[27]

Much have we learned of [Mæthhild's life](#):
15 How the courtship of Geat was crowned with grief,
How love and its sorrows allowed him no sleep.
That has passed over: so this may depart!

[Theodoric](#) held for thirty winters
The town of the [Mærings](#): that was told unto many.
20 That has passed over: so this may depart!

We all have heard of [Eormanric](#)
 Of the wolfish heart: a wide realm he had
 Of the Gothic kingdom. Grim was the king.
 Many men sat and bemoaned their sorrows,
 25 Woefully watching and wishing always
 That the cruel king might be conquered at last.
 That has passed over: so this may depart!

[28]

Sad in his soul he sitteth joyless,
 Mournful in mood. He many times thinks
 30 That no end will e'er come to the cares he endures.
 Then must he think how throughout the world
 The gracious God often gives his help
 And manifold honors to many an earl
 And sends wide his fame; but to some he gives woes.
 35 Of myself and my sorrows I may say in truth
 That I was happy once as the [Heodenings' scop](#),
 Dear to my lord. Deor was my name.
 Many winters I found a worthy following,
 Held my lord's heart, till Heorrenda came,
 40 The skillful singer, and received the land-right
 That the proud helm of earls had once promised to me!
 That has passed over: so this may depart!

1. *Weland*, or Wayland; the blacksmith of the Norse gods. He is represented as being the son of Wada (see [Widsith, v. 22, note](#)).

8. *Beadohild* was violated by Weland, and this stanza refers to the approaching birth of her son Widia (or Wudga). (See [Widsith, vv. 124, 130](#), and [Waldhere, B, vv. 4-10](#).)

14. The exact meaning of the third strophe as here translated is not clear. To make it refer to the story of Nithhad and Weland, it is necessary to make certain changes suggested by Professor Tupper (*Modern Philology*, October, 1911; *Anglia*, xxxvii, 118). Thus amended, this stanza would read: "Of the violation of (Beadu)hild many of us have heard. The affections of the Geat (i.e., Nithhad) were boundless, so that sorrowing love deprived him of all sleep." This grief of Nithhad would be that caused by the killing of his sons and the shame brought on his daughter. Thus the first three stanzas of the poem would refer to (1) Weland's torture, (2) Beadohild's shame, and (3) Nithhad's grief.

18. Strophe four refers to Theodoric the Goth (see [Widsith, v. 115](#), and [Waldhere, B, v. 4, note](#)). He was banished to Attila's court for thirty years.

19. *Mærings*: a name applied to the Ostrogoths.

21. *Eormanric* was king of the Goths and uncle to Theodoric. He died about 375 A.D. He put his only son to death, had his wife torn to pieces, and ruined the happiness of many people. For an account of his crimes see the [notes to Widsith, v. 8](#).

36. See, for the connection of the *Heodenings* and the sweet-singing *Heorrenda*, the [note to Widsith, v. 21](#).

[29]

WALDHERE

[Critical text and translation: Dickens, *Runic and Heroic Poems*, p. 56.]

Date: Probably eighth century.

Information as to the story is found in a number of continental sources. Its best known treatment is in a Latin poem, *Waltharius*, by Ekkehard of St. Gall, dating from the first half of the tenth century. Ekkehard's story is thus summarized in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*: "Alphere, king of Aquitaine, had a son named Waltharius, and Heriricus, king of Burgundy, an only daughter named Hiltgund, who was betrothed to Waltharius. While they were yet children, however, Attila, king of the Huns, invaded Gaul, and the kings seeing no hope in resistance, gave up their children to him as hostages, together with much treasure. Under like compulsion treasure was obtained also from Gibicho, king of the Franks, who sent as hostage a youth of noble birth named Hagano. In Attila's service, Waltharius and Hagano won great renown as warriors, but the latter eventually made his escape. When Waltharius grew up, he became Attila's chief general; yet he remembered his old engagement with Hiltgund. On his return from a victorious campaign he made a great feast for the king and his court, and when all were sunk in their drunken sleep, he and Hiltgund fled laden with much gold. On their way home they had to cross the Rhine near Worms. There the king of the Franks, Guntharius, the son of Gibicho, heard from the ferryman of the gold they were carrying and determined to secure it. Accompanied by Hagano and eleven other picked warriors, he overtook them as they rested in a cave in the Vosges. Waltharius offered him a large share of the gold in order to obtain peace; but the king demanded the whole, together with Hiltgund and the horses. Stimulated by the promise of great rewards, the eleven warriors now attacked Waltharius one after another, but he slew them all. Hagano had tried to dissuade Guntharius from the attack; but now, since his nephew was among the slain, he formed a plan with the king for surprising Waltharius. On the following day they both fell upon him after he had quitted his stronghold, and, in the struggle that ensued, all three were maimed. Waltharius, however, was able to proceed on his way with Hiltgund, and the story ends happily with their marriage."

Both our fragments, which are found on two leaves in the Royal Library at Copenhagen, refer to a time immediately before the final encounter. The first is spoken by the lady; the second by the man. We cannot tell how long this poem may have been. What we have may be leaves from a long epic, or a short poem, or an episode in a long epic.]

[30]

[she eagerly heartened him:](#)

“Lo, the work of [Weland](#) shall not weaken or fail
For the man who the mighty [Mimming](#) can wield,
The frightful brand. Oft in battle have fallen
5 Sword-wounded warriors one after the other.
6 Vanguard of Attila, thy valor must ever
Endure the conflict! The day is now come,
9 When fate shall award you one or the other:
10 To lose your life or have lasting glory,
Through all the ages, O Ælfhere’s son!
No fault do I find, my faithful lover,
Saying I have seen thee at sword-play weaken,
Yield like a coward to a conqueror’s arms,
15 Flee from the field of fight and escape,
Protect thy body, though bands of the foemen
Were smiting thy burnies with broad-edged swords;
But unfalt’ring still farther the fight thou pursuedst
Over the line of battle; hence, my lord, I am burdened
20 With fear that too fiercely to the fight thou shalt rush
To the place of encountering thy opponent in conflict,
To wage on him war. Be worthy of thyself
In glorious deeds while thy God protects thee!
Have no fear as to sword for the fine-gemmed weapon
25 Has been given thee to aid us: on Guthhere with it
Thou shalt pay back the wrong of unrighteously seeking
To stir up the struggle and strife of battle;
[He rejected that sword](#) and the jewelled treasure,
The lustrous gems; now, leaving them all,
30 He shall flee from this field to find his lord,
His ancient land, or lie here forever
Asleep, if he”

[31]

1. The speaker is Hildegyth (the Old English form for Hiltgund).

2. *Weland*: the blacksmith of Teutonic myth. See *Deor’s Lament*, [introductory note](#), and notes to [vv. 1](#) and [8](#).

3. *Mimming* was the most famous of the swords made by Weland.

28. Waldhere had offered Guthhere a large share of the treasure as an inducement for him to desist from the attack, and Guthhere had refused it.

B

“ [a better sword](#)
Except that other, which also I have
[Closely encased](#) in its cover of jewels.
[I know that Theodoric](#) thought that to Widia
5 Himself he would send it, and the sword he would join
With large measure of jewels and many other brands,
Worked all with gold. This reward he would send
Because, when a captive, the kinsman of Nithhad,
Weland’s son, Widia, from his woes had released him—
10 Thus in haste he escaped from the hands of the giants.”
Waldhere spoke, the warrior brave;
He held in his hand his helper in battle,
He grasped his weapon, shouting words of defiance:
“Indeed, thou hadst faith, O [friend of the Burgundians](#),
15 That the hand of [Hagena](#) had held me in battle,
Defeated me on foot. Fetch now, if thou darest,
From me weary with war my worthy gray corselet!
It lies on my shoulder as ’twas left me by Ælfhere,
Goodly and gorgeous and gold-bedecked,
20 The most honorable of all for an atheling to hold
When he goes into battle to guard his life,
To fight with his foes: fail me it will never
When a stranger band shall strive to encounter me,
Besiege me with swords, as thou soughtest to do.
25 He alone will vouchsafe the victory who always
Is eager and ready to aid every right:
He who hopes for the help of the holy Lord,
For the grace of God, shall gain it surely,
If his earlier work has earned the reward.
30 Well may the brave warriors then their wealth enjoy,
Take pride in their property! That is”

[32]

[33]

1. The opening of the second fragment finds the two champions ready for the final struggle. Guthhere is finishing his boast, in which he praises his equipment.

3. The meaning of this passage is obscure, but the translation here given seems to be the most reasonable conjecture. He probably refers to a sword that he has at hand in a jewelled case ready for use.

4. Stopping thus to give a history of the weapon calls to mind many similar passages in the Homeric poems. The particular story in mind here is the escape of Theodoric from the giants. He loses his way and falls into the hands of one of the twelve giants who guard Duke Nitger. He gains the favor of Nitger's sister, and through her lets his retainers, Hildebrand, Witige, and Heime know of his plight. They defeat the giants and release him. Witige and Heime are the Middle High German forms for the old English *Widia* (see *Deor's Lament*, v. 8, note), or Wudga and Hama (see *Widsith*, vv. 124, 130, note).

14. *Friend of the Burgundians*: a usual old English expression for "king." Guthhere was king of the Burgundians in the middle of the fifth century (see *Widsith*, vv. 19, 66, notes).

15. Hagena is now the only one of Guthhere's comrades that has not been killed by Waldhere. Cf. *Widsith*, v. 21.

[34]

THE FIGHT AT FINNSBURG

[Edition used: Chambers, *Beowulf*, p. 158. See also Dickins, *Runic and Heroic Poems*, p. 64.

Alliterative translation, Gummere, *Oldest English Epic*, p. 160.

The manuscript is now lost. We have only an inaccurate version printed by Hickes at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Many difficulties are therefore found in the text. For a good discussion of the text, see an article by Mackie in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, xvi, 250.

This fragment belongs to the epic story of Finn which is alluded to at some length in *Beowulf* (vv. 1068-1159). The saga can be reconstructed in its broad outlines, though it is impossible to be sure of details. One of the most puzzling of these details is the position in which the "Fight" occurs. In the story are two fights, either one of which may be the one described in the fragment. The weight of opinion seems to favor the first conflict, that in which Hnæf is killed. As summarized by Möller, the Finn story is briefly as follows:

"Finn, king of the Frisians, had carried off Hildeburh, daughter of Hoc (*Beowulf*, v. 1076), probably with her consent. Her father Hoc seems to have pursued the fugitives, and to have been slain in the fight which ensued on his overtaking them. After the lapse of some twenty years, Hoc's sons Hnæf and Hengest, were old enough to undertake the duty of avenging their father's death. They make an inroad into Finn's country and a battle takes place in which many warriors, among them Hnæf and a son of Finn (1074, 1079, 1115), are killed. Peace is therefore solemnly concluded, and the slain warriors are burnt (1068-1124).

"As the year is too far advanced for Hengest to return home (1130 ff.), he and those of his men who survive remain for the winter in the Frisian country with Finn. But Hengest's thoughts dwell constantly on the death of his brother Hnæf, and he would gladly welcome any excuse to break the peace which had been sworn by both parties. His ill concealed desire for revenge is noticed by the Frisians, who anticipate it by themselves taking the initiative and attacking Hengest and his men whilst they are sleeping in the hall. This is the night attack described in the "Fight." It would seem that after a brave and desperate resistance Hengest himself falls in this fight at the hands of Hunlafing (1143), but two of his retainers, Guthlaf and Oslaf, succeed in cutting their way through their enemies and in escaping to their own land. They return with fresh troops, attack and slay Finn, and carry his queen, Hildeburh, off with them (1125-1159)." —Wyatt, *Beowulf*, (1901), p. 145.

Professor Gummere finds in the fragment an example bearing out his theory of the development of the epic. "The qualities which difference it from *Beowulf*," he says, "are mainly negative; it lacks sentiment, moralizing, the leisure of the writer; it did not attempt probably to cover more than a single event; and one will not err in finding it a fair type of the epic songs which roving singers were wont to sing before lord and liegeman in hall and which were used with more or less fidelity by makers of complete epic poems." [35]

" Are the gables not burning?"

Boldly replied then the battle-young king:

"The day is not dawning; no dragon is flying,
And the high gable-horns of the hall are not burning,
5 But the brave men are bearing the battle line forward,
While bloodthirsty sing the birds of slaughter.

Now clangs the gray corselet, clashes the war-wood,
Shield answers shaft. Now shineth the moon,
Through its cover of clouds. Now cruel days press us

10 That will drive this folk to deadly fight.
But wake at once, my warriors bold,
Stand now to your armor and strive for honor;
Fight at the front unafraid and undaunted."

15 Then arose from their rest, ready and valiant,
Gold-bedecked soldiers, and girded their swords.

The noble knights went now to the door
And seized their swords, Sigferth and Eaha,
And to the other door Ordlaf and Guthlaf,
And Hengest who followed to help the defense.

20 Now Guthere restrained Garulf from strife,
Lest fearless at the first of the fight he rush
To the door and daringly endanger his life,
Since now it was stormed by so stalwart a hero.
But unchecked by these words a challenge he shouted,

[36]

²⁵ Boldly demanding what man held the door.
 "I am [Sigferth](#)," he said, "the Secgan's prince;
 Wide have I wandered; many woes have I known
[And](#) bitter battles. Be it bad or good
[Thou](#) shalt surely receive what thou seekest from me."
³⁰ At the wall by the door rose the din of battle;
 In the hands of heroes the hollow bucklers
 Shattered the shields. Shook then the hall floor
 Till there fell in the fight the faithful Garulf,
 Most daring and doughty of the dwellers on earth,
³⁵ [The son of Guthlaf](#); and scores fell with him.
 O'er the corpses hovered the hungry raven,
 Swarthy and sallow-brown. A sword-gleam blazed
 As though all Finnsburg in flames were burning. [37]
 Never heard I of heroes more hardy in war,
⁴⁰ Of sixty who strove more strongly or bravely,
 Of swains who repaid their sweet mead better
 Than his loyal liegemen to their loved Hnæf.
 Five days they fought, but there fell not a one
 Of the daring band, though the doors they held always.
⁴⁵ Now went from the warfare [a wounded chief](#).
 He said that his burnie was broken asunder,
 His precious war-gear, and pierced was his helmet.
 Then questioned [their chief](#) and inquired of him
 How the warriors recovered from the wounds they received,
⁵⁰ Or which of the youths

1. The fragment begins in the middle of a word.
2. The "battle-young king" is probably the Hengest of [v. 19](#). Possibly he is to be identified with Hengest, the conqueror of Kent.
- 5, 6. In the original these lines seem to be incomplete. The translation attempts to keep the intended meaning.
- 14, 15. In the original these appear as a single greatly expanded line, which was probably at one time two lines.
17. *Sigferth* (see also [line 26](#)), prince of the Secgans is probably identical with Sæferth who ruled the Secgans in [Widsith, v. 31](#).
18. *Ordlaf and Guthlaf* appear in the account in *Beowulf* (vv. 1148, ff.) as Oslaf and Guthlaf. They are the avengers of Hnæf.
20. From the construction it is impossible to tell who is the speaker and who is being restrained. But from [line 33](#) it is seen to be Garulf who neglects the advice and is killed. Garulf and Guthere are, of course, of the attacking band.
26. *Sigferth*, one of the defenders. See [v. 17, above](#).
- 28, 29. These lines are obscure. Probably they mean that Garulf may have as good as he sends in the way of a fight.
35. Guthlaf, the father of Garulf (the assailant) was probably not the Guthalf of [line 18](#), who was a defender. If we have here a conflict between father and son, very little is made of it.
45. It is impossible to tell who the wounded warrior was or which chief is referred to in [line 48](#).

[38]

2. GNOMIC GROUP

CHARMS

[Edition used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*.

Critical edition and discussion of most of the charms: Felix Grendon, *Journal of American Folk-lore*, xxii, 105 ff. See that article for bibliography.

Grendon divides the charms into five classes:

1. Exorcisms of diseases and disease spirits.
2. Herbal charms.
3. Charms for transferring disease.
4. Amulet charms.
5. Charm remedies.

These charms contain some of the most interesting relics of the old heathen religion of the Anglo-Saxons incongruously mingled with Christian practices. They were probably written down at so late a time that the churchmen felt they could no longer do harm.]

I. FOR BEWITCHED LAND

Here is the remedy by which thou mayst improve thy fields if they will not produce well or if any evil thing is done to them by means of sorcery or witchcraft:

⁵ *Take at night, before daybreak, four pieces of turf from the four corners of the land and mark the places where they have stood. Take then oil and honey and yeast and the milk of every kind of cattle that is on that land and a piece of every kind of tree that is grown ¹⁰ on that land, except hard wood, and a piece of every kind of herb known by name, except burdock alone. Then put holy water on these and dip it thrice in the base of the turfs [39] and say these words: Crescite, grow, et multiplicamini, and multiply, et replete, and fill, terram, ¹⁵ this earth, in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti sint benedicti; and Pater Noster as often as anything else.*

Then carry the turfs to the church and have the priest sing four masses over them and have the green sides ²⁰ turned toward the altar. Then bring them back before sunset to the place where they were at first. Now make four crosses of aspen and write on the end of each Matheus and Marcus and Lucas and Johannes. Lay the crosses on the bottom of each hole and then say: ²⁵ Crux Matheus, crux Marcus, crux Lucas, crux Sanctus Johannes. Then take the sods and lay them on top and say nine times the word Crescite, and the Pater Noster as often. Turn then to the east and bow humbly nine times and say these words:

³⁰ [Eastward I stand](#), for honors I pray;
I pray to the God of glory; I pray to the gracious Lord;
I pray to the high and holy Heavenly Father;
I pray to the earth and all of the heavens,
And to the true and virtuous virgin Saint Mary,
³⁵ And to the high hall of Heaven and its power,
That with God's blessing I may unbind this spell
With my open teeth, and through trusty thought
May awaken the growth for our worldly advantage,
May fill these fields by fast belief,
⁴⁰ May improve this planting, for the prophet saith [40]
That he hath honors on earth whose alms are free,
Who wisely gives, by the will of God.

Then turn three times following the course of the sun, stretch thyself prostrate, and chant the litanies. ⁴⁵ Then say Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus through to the end. Then chant Benedicte with outstretched arms, and the Magnificat and Pater Noster three times and commend thy prayer to the praise and glory of Christ and Saint Mary and the Holy Rood, and to the honor ⁵⁰ of him who owns the land and to all those that are subject to him. When all this is done, get some unknown seed from beggars, and give them twice as much as thou takest from them. Then gather all thy plowing gear together and bore a hole in the beam and put in ⁵⁵ it incense and fennel and consecrated soap and consecrated salt. Take the seed and put it on the body of the plow, and then say:

[Erce](#), Erce, Erce, of earth the mother,
May he graciously grant thee, God Eternal,
⁶⁰ To have fertile fields and fruitful harvests,
Growing in profit and gaining in power;
A host of products and harvests in plenty,
Bright with the broad barley harvest;
And heavy with the white harvest of wheat,
⁶⁵ And all the harvest of the earth. May the Almighty Lord grant
And all his saints who are seated in heaven,
That against all of the enemies this earth may be guarded, [41]
Protected and made proof against the powers of evil,
Against sorceries and spells dispersed through the land.
⁷⁰ Now I pray to the Power who planned the creation
That no woman of witchcraft, no worker of magic,
May change or unspell the charm I have spoken.

Then drive forth the plow and turn the first furrow and say:

⁷⁵ Hail to thee, Earth, [of all men the mother](#),
Be goodly thy growth in God's embrace,
Filled with food as a favor to men.

Then take meal of every kind and bake a loaf as broad as it will lie between the two hands, kneading ⁸⁰ it with milk and with holy water, and lay it under the first furrow. Say then:

Full be the field with food for mankind,
Blossoming brightly. Blessed by thou
By the holy name of Heaven's Creator,
⁸⁵ And the maker of Earth, which men inhabit.
May God who created the ground grant us growing gifts,
That each kernel of corn may come to use.

Say then three times, Crescite in nomine patris, sint benedicti. Amen and Pater Noster three times.

[30](#). Irregularities in the meter in the translations are imitations of similar irregularities in the original.

[58](#). *Erce*: probably the name of an old Teutonic deity, the Mother of Earth. This reference is all we have to preserve the name.

75. The conception of a goddess as Mother of Earth and of Earth as Mother of Men is entirely pagan. This charm is a peculiar complex of Christian and pagan ideas.

[42]

II. AGAINST A SUDDEN STITCH

Against a [sudden stitch](#) take feverfew, and the red nettle that grows through the house, and plantain. Boil in butter.

Loud were they, lo loud, as over the lea they rode;
5 Resolute they were when they rode over the land.
Protect thyself that thy trouble become cured and healed.
Out, little stick, if it still is
I stood under the linden, under the light shield,
Where the mighty women their magic prepared,
10 And they sent their spears spinning and whistling.
But I will send them a spear in return,
Unerringly aim an arrow against them.
Out, little stick, if it still is within!
There sat a smith and a small knife forged
15 sharply with a stroke of iron.
Out little stick if it still is within!
Six smiths sat and worked their war-spears.
Out, spear! be not in, spear!
If it still is there, the stick of iron,
20 The work of the witches, away it shall melt.
[If](#) thou wert shot in the skin, or sore wounded in the flesh,
If in the blood thou wert shot, or in the bone thou wert shot,
If in the joint thou wert shot, there will be no jeopardy to your life.
If some deity shot it, or some devil shot it,
25 Or if some witch has shot it, now I am willing to help thee.
This is a remedy for a deity's shot; this is a remedy for a devil's shot;
This is a remedy for a witch's shot. I am willing to help thee.
[Flee](#) there into the forests
Be thou wholly healed. Thy help be from God.
30 *Then take the knife and put it into the liquid.*

[43]

1. The sudden stitch in the side (or rheumatic pain) is here thought of as coming from the arrows shot by the "mighty women"—the witches.

[21-28](#). These irregular lines are imitated from the original.

[44]

RIDDLES

[Critical editions: Wyatt, Tupper, and Trautmann. Wyatt (Boston, 1912, Belles Lettres edition) used as a basis for these translations. His numbering is always one lower than the other editions, since he rejects one riddle.

Date: Probably eighth century for most of them.

For translations of other riddles than those here given see Brooke, *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, Pancoast and Spaeth, *Early English Poems*, and Cook and Tinker, *Selections from Old English Poetry*.

There is no proof as to the authorship. There were probably one hundred of them in the original collection though only about ninety are left. Many of them are translations from the Latin. Some are true folk-riddles and some are learned.

In the riddles we find particulars of Anglo-Saxon life that we cannot find elsewhere. The *Cambridge History of English Literature* sums their effect up in the following sentence: "Furthermore, the author or authors of the Old English riddles borrow themes from native folk-songs and saga; in their hands inanimate objects become endowed with life and personality; the powers of nature become objects of worship such as they were in olden times; they describe the scenery of their own country, the fen, the river, and the sea, the horror of the untrodden forest, sun and moon engaged in perpetual pursuit of each other, the nightingale and the swan, the plow guided by the 'gray-haired enemy of the wood,' the bull breaking up clods left returned by the plow, the falcon, the arm-companion of æthelings—scenes, events, characters familiar in the England of that day."]

I. A STORM

[What man is so clever](#), so crafty of mind,
As to say for a truth who sends me a-traveling?
When I rise in my wrath, raging at times,
Savage is my sound. Sometimes I travel,
5 Go forth among the folk, set fire to their homes
And ravage and rob them; then rolls the smoke
Gray over the gables; great is the noise,
The death-struggle of the stricken. Then I stir up the woods

[45]

And the fruitful forests; I fell the trees,
 10 I, roofed over with rain, on my reckless journey,
 Wandering widely at the will of heaven.
 I bear on my back the bodily raiment,
 The fortunes of folk, their flesh and their spirits,
 Together to sea. Say who may cover me,
 15 Or what I am called, who carry this burden?

1. Some scholars feel that the first three riddles, all of which describe storms, are in reality one, with three divisions. There is little to indicate whether the scribe thought of them as separate or not.

II. A STORM

At times I travel in tracks undreamed of,
 In vasty wave-depths to visit the earth,
 The floor of the ocean. Fierce is the sea
 the foam rolls high;
 5 The whale-pool roars and rages loudly;
 The streams beat the shores, and they sling at times
 Great stones and sand on the steep cliffs,
 With weeds and waves, while wildly striving
 Under the burden of billows on the bottom of ocean
 10 The sea-ground I shake. My shield of waters
 I leave not ere he lets me who leads me always
 In all my travels. Tell me, wise man,
 Who was it that drew me from the depth of the ocean
 When the streams again became still and quiet,
 15 Who before had forced me in fury to rage?

[46]

III. A STORM

At times I am fast confined by my Master,
 Who sendeth forth under the fertile plain
 My broad bosom, but bridles me in.
 He drives in the dark a dangerous power
 5 To a narrow cave, where crushing my back
 Sits the weight of the world. No way of escape
 Can I find from the torment; so I tumble about
 The homes of heroes. The halls with their gables,
 The tribe-dwellings tremble; the trusty walls shake,
 10 Steep over the head. Still seems the air
 Over all the country and calm the waters,
 Till I press in my fury from my prison below,
 Obeying His bidding who bound me fast
 In fetters at first when he fashioned the world,
 15 In bonds and in chains, with no chance of escape
 From his power who points out the paths I must follow.
 Downward at times I drive the waves,
 Stir up the streams; to the strand I press
 The flint-gray flood: the foamy wave
 20 Lashes the wall. A lurid mountain
 Rises on the deep; dark in its trail
 Stirred up with the sea a second one comes,
 And close to the coast it clashes and strikes
 On the lofty hills. Loud soundeth the boat,
 25 The shouting of shipmen. Unshaken abide
 The stone cliffs steep through the strife of the waters,
 The dashing of waves, when the deadly tumult
 Crowds to the coast. Of cruel strife
 The sailors are certain if the sea drive their craft
 30 With its terrified guests on the grim rolling tide;
 They are sure that the ship will be shorn of its power,
 Be deprived of its rule, and will ride foam-covered
 On the ridge of the waves. Then ariseth a panic,
 Fear among folk of the force that commands me,
 35 Strong on my storm-track. Who shall still that power?
 At times I drive through the dark wave-vessels
 That ride on my back, and wrench them asunder
 And lash them with sea-streams; or I let them again
 Glide back together. It is the greatest of noises,
 40 Of clamoring crowds, of crashes the loudest,

[47]

When clouds as they strive in their courses shall strike
 Edge against edge; inky of hue
 In flight o'er the folk bright fire they sweat,
 A stream of flame; destruction they carry
⁴⁵ Dark over men with a mighty din.
 Fighting they fare. They let fall from their bosom
 A deafening rain of rattling liquid,
 Of storm from their bellies. In battle they strive,
 The awful army; anguish arises,
⁵⁰ Terror of mind to the tribes of men,
 Distress in the strongholds, when the stalking goblins,
 The pale ghosts shoot with their sharp weapons.
 The fool alone fears not their fatal spears;
 But he perishes too if the true God send
⁵⁵ Straight from above in streams of rain,
 Whizzing and whistling the whirlwind's arrows,
 The flying death. Few shall survive
 Whom that violent guest in his grimness shall visit.
 I always stir up that strife and commotion;
⁶⁰ Then I bear my course to the battle of clouds,
 Powerfully strive and press through the tumult,
 Over the bosom of the billows; bursteth loudly
 The gathering of elements. Then again I descend
 In my helmet of air and hover near the land,
⁶⁵ And lift on my back the load I must bear,
 Minding the mandates of the mighty Lord.
 So I, a tried servant, sometimes contend:
 Now under the earth; now from over the waves
 I drive to the depths; now dropping from heaven,
⁷⁰ I stir up the streams, or strive to the skies,
 Where I war with the welkin. Wide do I travel,
 Swift and noisily. Say now my name,
 Or who raises me up when rest is denied me,
 Or who stays my course when stillness comes to me?

[48]

V. A SHIELD

A lonely warrior, I am wounded with iron,
 Scarred with sword-points, sated with battle-play,
 Weary of weapons. I have witnessed much fighting,
 Much stubborn strife. From the strokes of war
⁵ I have no hope for help or release
 Ere I pass from the world with the proud warrior band.
 With brands and billies they beat upon me;
 The hard edges hack me; the handwork of smiths
 In crowds I encounter; with courage I endure
¹⁰ Ever bitterer battles. No balm may I find,
 And no doctor to heal me in the whole field of battle,
 To bind me with ointments and bring me to health,
 But my grievous gashes grow ever sorer
 Through death-dealing strokes by day and night.

[49]

VII. A SWAN

My robe is noiseless when I roam the earth,
 Or stay in my home, or stir up the water.
 At times I am lifted o'er the lodgings of men
 By the aid of my trappings and the air above.
⁵ The strength of the clouds then carries me far,
 Bears me on its bosom. My beautiful ornament,
 My raiment rustles and raises a song,
 Sings without tiring. I touch not the earth
 But wander a stranger over stream and wood.

VIII. A NIGHTINGALE

With my mouth I am master of many a language;
 Cunningly I carol; I discourse full oft
 In melodious lays; loud do I call,
 Ever mindful of melody, undiminished in voice.
⁵ An old evening-scop, to earls I bring
 Solace in cities; when, skillful in music,

My voice I raise, restful at home
 They sit in silence. Say what is my name,
 That call so clearly and cleverly imitate
 10 The song of the scop, and sing unto men
 Words full welcome with my wonderful voice.

XIV. A HORN

I was once an armed warrior. Now the worthy youth
 Gorgeously gears me with gold and silver,
 Curiously twisted. At times men kiss me.
 Sometimes I sound and summon to battle
 5 The stalwart company. A steed now carries me
 Across the border. The courser of the sea
 Now bears me o'er the billows, bright in my trappings.
[Now a comely maiden](#) covered with jewels
 Fills my bosom with beer. On the board now I lie
 10 Lidless and lonely and lacking my trappings.
 Now fair in my fretwork at the feast I hang
 In my place on the wall while warriors drink.
 Now brightened for battle, on the back of a steed
 A war-chief shall bear me. Then the wind I shall breathe,
 15 Shall swell with sound from someone's bosom.
 At times with my voice I invite the heroes,
 The warriors to wine; or I watch for my master,
 And sound an alarm and save his goods,
 Put the robber to flight. Now find out my name.

[8.](#) Cosijn's reading has been adopted for the first half line.

XV. A BADGER

My throat is like snow, and my sides and my head
 Are a swarthy brown; I am swift in flight.
 Battle-weapons I bear; on my back stand hairs,
 And also on my cheeks. O'er my eyes on high
 5 Two ears tower; with my toes I step
 On the green grass. Grief comes upon me
 If the slaughter-grim hunter shall see me in hiding,
 Shall find me alone where I fashion my dwelling,
 Bold with my brood. I abide in this place
 10 With my strong young children till a stranger shall come
 And bring dread to my door. Death then is certain.
 Hence, trembling I carry my terrified children
 Far from their home and flee unto safety.
 If he crowds me close as he comes behind,
 15 I bare my breast. In my burrow I dare not
 Meet my furious foe (it were foolish to do so),
 But, wildly rushing, I work a road
 Through the high hill with my hands and feet.
 I fail not in defending my family's lives;
 20 If I lead the little ones below to safety,
 Through a secret hole inside the hill,
 My beloved brood, no longer need I
 Fear the offense of the fierce-battling dogs.
 25 Whenever the hostile one hunts on my trail,
 Follows me close, he will fail not of conflict,
 Of a warm encounter, when he comes on my war-path,
 If I reach, in my rage, through the roof of my hill
 And deal my deadly [darts](#) of battle
 30 On the foe I have feared and fled from long.

[29.](#) The "deadly darts of battle" have caused "porcupine" to be proposed as a solution to this riddle, though when all the details are considered "badger" seems on the whole the more reasonable.

XXIII. A Bow

My name is spelled *AGOB* with the order reversed.
 I am marvelously fashioned and made for fighting.
 When I am bent and my bosom sends forth
 Its poisoned stings, I straightway prepare

5 My deadly darts to deal afar.
 As soon as my master, who made me for torment,
 Loosens my limbs, my length is increased
 Till I vomit the venom with violent motions,
 The swift-killing poison I swallowed before.
 10 Not any man shall make his escape,
 Not one that I spoke of shall speed from the fight,
 If there falls on him first what flies from my belly.
 He pays with his strength for the poisonous drink,
 For the fatal cup which forfeits his life.
 15 Except when fettered fast, I am useless.
 Unbound I shall fail. Now find out my name.

XXVI. A BIBLE

[A stern destroyer](#) struck out my life,
 Deprived me of power; he put me to soak,
 Dipped me in water, dried me again, [53]
 And set me in the sun, where I straightway lost
 5 The hairs that I had. Then the hard edge
 Of the keen knife cut me and cleansed me of soil;
 Then fingers folded me. The fleet quill of the bird
 With speedy drops spread tracks often
 Over the brown surface, swallowed the tree-dye,
 10 A deal of the stream, stepped again on me,
 Traveled a black track. With protecting boards
 Then a crafty one covered me, enclosed me with hide,
 Made me gorgeous with gold. Hence I am glad and rejoice
 At the smith's fair work with its wondrous adornments.
 15 Now may these rich trappings, and the red dye's tracings,
 And all works of wisdom spread wide the fame
 Of the Sovereign of nations! Read me not as a penance!
 If the children of men will cherish and use me,
 They shall be safer and sounder and surer of victory,
 20 More heroic of heart and happier in spirit,
 More unfailing in wisdom. More friends shall they have,
 Dear and trusty, and true and good,
 And faithful always, whose honors and riches
 Shall increase with their love, and who cover their friends [54]
 25 With kindness and favors and clasp them fast
 With loving arms. I ask how men call me
 Who aid them in need. My name is far famed.
 I am helpful to men, and am holy myself.

1. Here, of course, a "codex," or manuscript of a Bible is in the writer's mind. He describes first the killing of the animal and the preparation of the skin for writing. Then the writing and binding of the book is described. Last of all, the writer considers the use the book will be to men.

XLV. DOUGH

In a corner I heard a curious weak thing
 Swelling and sounding and stirring its cover.
 On that boneless body a beautiful woman
 Laid hold with her hands; the high-swelled thing
 She covered with a cloth, the clever lord's daughter.

XLVII. A BOOKWORM

A moth ate a word. To me that seemed
 A curious happening when I heard of that wonder,
 That a worm should swallow the word of a man,
 A thief in the dark eat a thoughtful discourse
 5 And the strong base it stood on. He stole, but he was not
 A whit the wiser when the word had been swallowed.

LX. A REED

[I stood on the strand](#) to the sea-cliffs near,
 Hard by the billows. To the home of my birth
 Fast was I fixed. Few indeed are there
 Of men who have ever at any time

5 Beheld my home in the hard waste-land.
 In the brown embrace of the billows and waves
 I was locked each dawn. Little I dreamed
 That early or late I ever should
 With men at the mead-feast mouthless speak forth
 10 Words of wisdom. It is a wondrous thing,
 And strange to the sight when one sees it first
 That the edge of a knife and the active hand
 And wit of the earl who wields the blade
 Should bring it about that I bear unto thee
 15 A secret message, meant for thee only,
 Boldly announce it, so that no other man
 May speak our secrets or spread them abroad.

1. This riddle occurs in the manuscript just before *The Husband's Message*, and some editors think that in the riddle we have a proper beginning for the poem. First is the account of the growth of the reed, or block of wood, then the account of its voyages, and last the message conveyed. There is really no way of telling whether the poems were meant to go together.

EXETER GNOMES

[Critical edition: Blanche Colton Williams, *Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon*, New York, 1914.

There are two sets of gnomes or proverbs in Old English. The Exeter collection, from which these are taken, consists of three groups. The second group, which contains the justly popular lines about the Frisian wife, is typical of the whole set.]

GROUP II

All frost shall freeze, fire consume wood,
 Earth grow its fruits. Ice shall bridge water,
 Which shall carry its cover and cunningly lock
 75 The herbs of earth. One only shall loose
 The fetter of frost, the Father Almighty.
 Winter shall away, the weather be fair,
 The sun hot in summer. The sea shall be restless.
 The deep way of death is the darkest of secrets.
 80 Holly flames on the fire. Afar shall be scattered
 The goods of a dead man. Glory is best.
 A king shall with cups secure his queen,
 Buy her with bracelets. Both shall at first
 Be generous with gifts. Then shall grow in the man
 85 The pride of war, and his wife shall prosper,
 Cherished by the folk; cheerful of mood,
 She shall keep all counsel and in kindness of heart
 Give horses and treasure; before the train of heroes
 With full measure of mead on many occasions
 90 She shall lovingly greet her gracious lord,
 Shall hold the cup high and hand him to drink
 Like a worthy wife. Wisely shall counsel
 The two who hold their home together.
 The ship shall be nailed, the shield be bound,
 95 The light linden-wood.

When he lands in the haven,
 To the Frisian wife is the welcome one dear:
 The boat is at hand and her bread-winner home,
 Her own provider. She invites him in
 And washes his sea-stained garments and gives him new ones to wear:
 100 It is pleasant on land when the loved one awaits you.
 Woman shall be wedded to man, and her wickedness oft shall disgrace him;
 Some are firm in their faith, some forward and curious
 And shall love a stranger while their lord is afar.
 A sailor is long on his course, but his loved one awaits his coming,
 105 Abides what can not be controlled, for the time will come at last
 For his home return, if his health permit, and the heaving waters
 High over his head do not hold him imprisoned.

THE FATES OF MEN

[Text: Grein-Wülcker, *Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen Poesie*, iii, 148. The poem is typical of a large group of Old English poems which give well-known sayings or proverbs. Other poems of this group are *The Gifts of Men*, *The Wonders of Creation*, *A Father's Instructions to His Son*, and the like.]

Full often through the grace of God it happens

That man and wife to the world bring forth
 A babe by birth; they brightly adorn it,
 And tend it and teach it till the time comes on
 5 With the passing of years when the young child's limbs
 Have grown in strength and sturdy grace.
 It is fondled and fed by father and mother
 And gladdened with gifts. God alone knows
 What fate shall be his in the fast-moving years.
 10 To one it chances in his childhood days
 To be snatched away by sudden death
 In woeful wise. The wolf shall devour him,
 The hoary heath-dweller. Heart-sick with grief,
 His mother shall mourn him; but man cannot change it.
 15 One of hunger shall starve; one the storm shall drown.
 One the spear shall pierce; one shall perish in war.
 One shall lead his life without light in his eyes,
 Shall feel his way fearing. Infirm in his step,
 One his wounds shall bewail, his woeful pains—
 20 Mournful in mind shall lament his fate.
 One from the top of a tree in the woods
 Without feathers shall fall, but he flies none the less,
 Swoops in descent till he seems no longer
 The forest tree's fruit: at its foot on the ground
 25 He sinks in silence, his soul departed—
 On the roots now lies his lifeless body.
 One shall fare afoot on far-away paths,
 Shall bear on his back his burdensome load,
 Tread the dewy track among tribes unfriendly
 30 Amid foreign foemen. Few are alive
 To welcome the wanderer. The woeful face
 Of the hapless outcast is hateful to men.
 One shall end life on the lofty gallows;
 Dead shall he hang till the house of his soul,
 35 His bloody body is broken and mangled:
 His eyes shall be plucked by the plundering raven,
 The sallow-hued spoiler, while soulless he lies,
 And helpless to fight with his hands in defense
 Against the grim thief. Gone is his life.
 40 With his skin plucked off and his soul departed,
 The body all bleached shall abide its fate;
 The death-mist shall drown him—doomed to disgrace.
 The body of one shall burn on the fire;
 The flame shall feed on the fated man,
 45 And death shall descend full sudden upon him
 In the lurid glow. Loud weeps the mother
 As her boy in the brands is burned to ashes.
 One the sword shall slay as he sits in the mead-hall
 Angry with ale; it shall end his life,
 50 Wine-sated warrior: his words were too reckless!
 One shall meet his death through the drinking of beer,
 Maddened with mead, when no measure he sets
 To the words of his mouth through wisdom of mind;
 He shall lose his life in loathsome wise,
 55 Shall shamefully suffer, shut off from joy,
 And men shall know him by the name of self-slayer,
 Shall deplore with their mouths the mead-drinker's fall.
 One his hardships of youth through the help of God
 Overcomes and brings his burdens to naught,
 60 And his age when it comes shall be crowned with joy;
 He shall prosper in pleasure, in plenty and wealth,
 With flourishing family and flowing mead—
 For such worthy rewards may one well wish to live!
 Thus many the fortunes the mighty Lord
 65 All over the earth to everyone grants,
 Dispenses powers as his pleasure shall lead him.
 One is favored with fortune; one failure in life;
 One pleasure in youth; one prowess in war,
 The sternest of strife; one in striking and shooting
 70 Earns his honors. And often in games
 One is crafty and cunning. A clerk shall one be,
 Weighted with wisdom. Wonderful skill
 Is one granted to gain in the goldsmith's art;
 Full often he decks and adorns in glory
 75 A great king's noble, who gives him rewards,
 Grants him broad lands, which he gladly receives.

[59]

[60]

[61]

One shall give pleasure to people assembled
 On the benches at beer, shall bring to them mirth,
 Where drinkers are draining their draughts of joy.
 80 One holding his harp in his hands, at the feet
 Of his lord shall sit and receive a reward;
 Fast shall his fingers fly o'er the strings;
 Daringly dancing and darting across,
 With his nails he shall pluck them. His need is great.
 85 One shall make tame the towering falcon,
 The hawk on his hand, till the haughty bird
 Grows quiet and gentle; jesses he makes him,
 Feeds in fetters the feather-proud hawk,
 The daring air-treader with daintiest morsels,
 90 Till the falcon performs the feeder's will:
 Hooded and belled, he obeys his master,
 Tamed and trained as his teacher desires.
 Thus in wondrous wise the Warden of Glory
 Through every land has allotted to men
 95 Cunning and craft; his decrees go forth
 To all men on earth of every race.
 For the graces granted let us give him thanks—
 For his manifold mercies to the men of earth.

[62]

3. ELEGIAC GROUP

THE WANDERER

[Text used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*. It is also given in Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*.

Alliterative translations: Edward Fulton, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. xii (1898); Pancoast and Spaeth, *Early English Poems*, p. 65.

Lines 77 ff. and 101 ff. have been compared to a passage in Keats's *Hyperion* (book ii, 34-38).]

Often the lonely one longs for honors,
 The grace of God, though, grieved in his soul,
 Over the waste of the waters far and wide he shall
 Row with his hands through the rime-cold sea,
 5 Travel the exile tracks: full determined is fate!
 So the wanderer spake, his woes remembering,
 His misfortunes in fighting and the fall of his kinsmen:
 "Often alone at early dawn
 I make my moan! Not a man now lives
 10 To whom I can speak forth my heart and soul
 And tell of its trials. In truth I know well
 That there belongs to a lord an illustrious trait,
 To fetter his feelings fast in his breast,
 To keep his own counsel though cares oppress him.
 15 The weary in heart against Wyrð has no help
 Nor may the troubled in thought attempt to get aid.
 Therefore the thane who is thinking of glory
 Binds in his breast his bitterest thoughts.
 So I fasten with fetters, confine in my breast
 20 My sorrows of soul, though sick oft at heart,
 In a foreign country far from my kinsmen.
 I long ago laid my loyal patron
 In sorrow under the sod; since then I have gone
 Weary with winter-care over the wave's foamy track,
 25 In sadness have sought a solace to find
 In the home and the hall of a host and ring-giver,
 Who, mindful of mercy in the mead-hall free,
 In kindness would comfort and care for me friendless,
 Would treat me with tenderness. The tried man knows
 30 How stern is sorrow, how distressing a comrade
 For him who has few of friends and loved ones:
 He trails the track of the exile; no treasure he has,
 But heart-chilling frost—no fame upon earth.
 He recalls his comrades and the costly hall-gifts
 35 Of his gracious gold-friend, which he gave him in youth
 To expend as he pleased: his pleasure has vanished!
 He who lacks for long his lord's advice,
 His love and his wisdom, learns full well
 How sorrow and slumber soothe together
 40 The way-worn wanderer to welcome peace.

[63]

[64]

He seems in his sleep to see his lord;
 He kisses and clasps him, and inclines on his knee
 His hands and his head as in happier days
 When he experienced the pleasure of his prince's favors.
 45 From his sleep then awakens the sorrowful wanderer;
 He sees full before him the fallow waves,
 The sea-birds bathing and beating their wings,
 Frost and snow falling with freezing hail.
 Then heavier grows the grief of his heart,
 50 Sad after his dream; he sorrows anew.
 His kinsmen's memory he calls to his mind,
 And eagerly greets it; in gladness he sees
 His valiant comrades. Then they vanish away.
 In the soul of a sailor no songs burst forth,
 55 No familiar refrains. Fresh is his care
 Who sends his soul o'er the sea full oft,
 Over the welling waves his wearied heart.
 Hence I may not marvel, when I am mindful of life,
 That my sorrowing soul grows sick and dark,
 60 When I look at the lives of lords and earls,
 How they are suddenly snatched from the seats of their power,
 In their princely pride. So passes this world,
 And droops and dies each day and hour;
 And no man is sage who knows not his share
 65 Of winter in the world. The wise man is patient,
 Not too hot in his heart, nor too hasty in words,
 Nor too weak in war, nor unwise in his rashness,
 Nor too forward nor fain, nor fearful of death,
 Nor too eager and arrogant till he equal his boasting.
 70 The wise man will wait with his words of boasting
 Till, restraining his thoughts, he thoroughly knows
 Where his vain words of vaunting eventually will lead him.
 The sage man perceives how sorrowful it is
 When all the wealth of the world lies wasted and scattered.
 75 So now over the earth in every land
 Stormed on by winds the walls are standing
 Rimy with hoar-frost, and the roofs of the houses;
 The wine-halls are wasted; far away are the rulers,
 Deprived of their pleasure. All the proud ones have fallen,
 80 The warriors by the wall: some war has borne off,
 In its bloody embrace; some birds have carried
 Over the high seas; to some the hoar wolf
 Has dealt their death; some with dreary faces
 By earls have been exiled in earth-caves to dwell:
 85 So has wasted this world through the wisdom of God,
 Till the proud one's pleasure has perished utterly,
 And the old [work of the giants](#) stands worthless and joyless.
 He who the waste of this wall-stead wisely considers,
 And looks down deep at the darkness of life,
 90 Mournful in mind, remembers of old
 Much struggle and spoil and speaks these words:
 'Where are the horses? Where are the heroes?
 Where are the high treasure-givers?
 Where are the proud pleasure-seekers? Where are the palace and its joys?
 Alas the bright wine-cup! Alas the burnie-warriors!
 95 Alas the prince's pride! How passes the time
 Under the shadow of night as it never had been!
 Over the trusty troop now towers full high
 A wall adorned with wondrous dragons.
 The strength of the spear has destroyed the earls,
 100 War-greedy weapons, Wyrd inexorable;
 And the storms strike down on the stony cliffs;
 The snows descend and seize all the earth
 In the dread of winter; then darkness comes
 And dusky night-shade. Down from the north
 105 The hated hail-storms beat on heroes with fury.
 All on earth is irksome to man;
 Oft changes the work of the fates, the world under the firmament.
 Here treasure is fleeting; here true friends are fleeting;
 Here comrades are fleeting; here kinsmen are fleeting.
 110 All idle and empty the earth has become.'
 So says the sage one in mind, as he sits and secretly ponders.
 Good is the man who is true to his trust; never should he betray anger,
 Divulge the rage of his heart till the remedy he knows
 That quickly will quiet his spirit. The quest of honor is a noble pursuit;

[65]

[66]

[67]

1. These opening lines are typical of the group of poems usually known as the "Elegies"—this and the next four poems in the book. It is probable that the poems of this group have no relation with one another save in general tone—a deep melancholy that, though present in the other old English poems is blackest in these.

15. *Wyrd*: the "Fate" of the Germanic peoples. The Anglo-Saxon's life was overshadowed by the power of *Wyrd*, though *Beowulf* says that "a man may escape his *Wyrd*—if he be good enough."

87. Ancient fortifications and cities are often referred to in Anglo-Saxon poetry as "the old work of the giants."

[68]

THE SEAFARER

[Edition used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*.

Up to line 65 this is one of the finest specimens of Anglo-Saxon poetry. It expresses as few poems in English have done the spirit of adventure, the *wanderlust* of springtime. The author was a remarkable painter of the sea and its conditions. From line 65 to the end the poem consists of a very tedious homily that must surely be a later addition.

The use of the first person throughout and the opposing sentiments expressed have caused several scholars to consider the first part of the poem a dialogue between a young man eager to go to sea and an old sailor. The divisions of the speeches suggested have been as follows:

(By Hönncher)	(By Kluge)	(By Rieger)
1-33a Sailor	1-33 Sailor	1-38a Sailor
33b-38 Youth	34-64 or 66 Youth	33b-38 Youth
39-43 Sailor		39-47 Sailor
44-52 Youth		48-52 Youth
53-57 Sailor		53-57 Sailor
58-64a Youth		58-71 Youth
		71-end Sailor

Sweet, in his *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, objects to these theories since there are not only no headings or divisions in the manuscript to indicate such divisions, but there are no breaks or contrasts in the poem itself.

"If we discard these theories," he says, "the simplest view of the poem is that it is the monologue of an old sailor who first describes the hardships of the seafaring life, and then confesses its irresistible attraction, which he justifies, as it were, by drawing a parallel between the seafarer's contempt for the luxuries of the life on land on the one hand and the aspirations of a spiritual nature on the other, of which the sea bird is to him the type. In dwelling on these ideals the poet loses sight of the seafarer and his half-heathen associations, and as inevitably rises to a contemplation of the cheering hopes of a future life afforded by Christianity."

The dullness and obscurity of the last part of the poem, however, and the obvious similarity to the homilies of the time make it very unlikely that the whole poem was written by one author.]

I will sing of myself a song that is true,
 Tell of my travels and troublesome days,
 How often I endured days of hardship;
 Bitter breast-care I have borne as my portion,
 5 Have seen from my ship sorrowful shores,
 Awful welling of waves; oft on watch I have been
 On the narrow night-wakes at the neck of the ship,
 When it crashed into cliffs; with cold often pinched
 Were my freezing feet, by frost bound tight
 10 In its blighting clutch; cares then burned me,
 Hot around my heart. Hunger tore within
 My sea-weary soul. To conceive this is hard
 For the landsman who lives on the lonely shore—
 How, sorrowful and sad on a sea ice-cold,
 15 I eked out my exile through the awful winter
 deprived of my kinsmen,
 Hung about by icicles; hail flew in showers.
 There I heard naught but the howl of the sea,
 The ice-cold surge with a swan-song at times;
 20 The note of the gannet for gayety served me,
 The sea-bird's song for sayings of people,
 For the mead-drink of men the mew's sad note.
 Storms beat on the cliffs, 'mid the cry of gulls,
 Icy of feather; and the eagle screamed,
 25 The dewy-winged bird. No dear friend comes
 With merciful kindness my misery to conquer.
 Of this little can he judge who has joy in his life,
 And, settled in the city, is sated with wine,
 And proud and prosperous—how painful it is
 30 When I wearily wander on the waves full oft!
 Night shadows descended; it snowed from the north;

[69]

The world was fettered with frost; hail fell to the earth,
The coldest of corns.

[70]

Yet course now desires

Which surge in my heart for the high seas,
35 That I test the terrors of the tossing waves;
My soul constantly kindles in keenest impatience
To fare itself forth and far off hence
To seek the strands of stranger tribes.

There is no one in this world so o'erweening in power,
40 So good in his giving, so gallant in his youth,
So daring in his deeds, so dear to his lord,
But that he leaves the land and longs for the sea.
By the grace of God he will gain or lose;
Nor hearkens he to harp nor has heart for gift-treasures,
45 Nor in the wiles of a wife nor in the world rejoices.
Save in the welling of waves no whit takes he pleasure;
But he ever has longing who is lured by the sea.

The forests are in flower and fair are the hamlets;
The woods are in bloom, the world is astir:
50 Everything urges one eager to travel,
Sends the seeker of seas afar
To try his fortune on the terrible foam.

The cuckoo warns in its woeful call;
The summer-ward sings, sorrow foretelling,
55 Heavy to the heart. Hard is it to know
For the man of pleasure, what many with patience
Endure who dare the dangers of exile!

In my bursting breast now burns my heart,
My spirit sallies over the sea-floods wide,
60 Sails o'er the waves, wanders afar
To the bounds of the world and back at once,
Eagerly, longingly; the lone flyer beckons
My soul unceasingly to sail o'er the whale-path,
Over the waves of the sea.

[71]

64. At this point the dull homiletic passage begins. Much of it is quite untranslatable. A free paraphrase may be seen in Cook and Tinker, *Translations from Old English Poetry*, p. 47.

[72]

THE WIFE'S LAMENT

[Text used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*, p. 146.

The meaning of some parts of this poem is very obscure—especially lines 18-21 and 42-47. No satisfactory explanation of them has been given. There is probably no relation except in general theme between it and [The Husband's Message](#).]

Sorrowfully I sing my song of woe,
My tale of trials. In truth I may say
That the buffets I have borne since my birth in the world
Were never more than now, either new or old.

5 Ever the evils of exile I endure!
Long since went my lord from the land of his birth,
Over the welling waves. Woeful at dawn I asked
Where lingers my lord, in what land does he dwell?
Then I fared into far lands and faithfully sought him,
10 A weary wanderer in want of comfort.

His treacherous tribesmen contrived a plot,
Dark and dastardly, to drive us apart
The width of a world, where with weary hearts
We live in loneliness, and longing consumes me.
15 My master commanded me to make my home here.
Alas, in this land my loved ones are few,
My faithful friends! Hence I feel great sorrow
That the man well-matched with me I have found
To be sad in soul and sorrowful in mind,

20 Concealing his thoughts and thinking of murder,
Though blithe in his bearing. Oft we bound us by oath
That the day of our death should draw us apart,
Nothing less end our love. Alas, all is changed!

Now is as naught, as if never it were,
25 Our faith and our friendship. Far and near I shall
Endure the hate of one dear to my heart!
He condemned me to dwell in a darksome wood,
Under an oak-tree in an earth-cave drear.
Old is the earth-hall. I am anxious with longing.

[73]

³⁰ Dim are the dales, dark the hills tower,
 Bleak the tribe-dwellings, with briars entangled,
 Unblessed abodes. Here bitterly I have suffered
 The faring of my lord afar. Friends there are on earth
 Living in love, in lasting bliss,
³⁵ While, wakeful at dawn, I wander alone
 Under the oak-tree the earth-cave near.
 Sadly I sit there the summer-long day,
 Wearily weeping my woeful exile,
 My many miseries. Hence I may not ever
⁴⁰ Cease my sorrowing, my sad bewailing,
 Nor all the longings of my life of woe.
 Always may the young man be mournful of spirit,
 Unhappy of heart, and have as his portion
 Many sorrows of soul, unceasing breast-cares,
⁴⁵ Though now blithe of behavior. Unbearable likewise
 Be his joys in the world. Wide be his exile
 To far-away folk-lands where my friend sits alone,
 A stranger under stone-cliffs, by storm made hoary,
 A weary-souled wanderer, by waters encompassed,
⁵⁰ In his lonely lodging. My lover endures
 Unmeasured mind-care: he remembers too oft
 A happier home. To him is fate cruel
 Who lingers and longs for the loved one's return!

[74]

[75]

THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

[Text used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*.

The piece of wood on which the message is written speaks throughout the poem. It is impossible to tell whether the sender of the message is husband or lover of the woman addressed.

Some scholars consider the [riddle on "The Reed," number LX](#), as the true beginning of this poem. It precedes the "Message" in the manuscript. Hicketeir (*Anglia*, xi, 363) thinks that it does not belong with that riddle, but that it is itself a riddle. He cites the Runes, in lines 51-2, especially as evidence. Trautmann (*Anglia* xvi, 207) thinks that it is part of a longer poem, in which the puzzling relation would be straightened out.]

[First](#) I shall freely confide to you
[The](#) tale of this tablet of wood. As a tree I grew up
[On](#) the coast of Mecealde, close by the sea.
[Frequently](#) thence to foreign lands
⁵ I set forth in travel, the salt streams tried
[In](#) the keel of the ship at a king's behest.
 Full oft on the bosom of a boat I have dwelt,
 Fared over the foam a friend to see,
 Wherever my master on a mission sent me,
¹⁰ Over the crest of the wave. I am come here to you
 On the deck of a ship and in duty inquire
 How now in your heart you hold and cherish
 The love of my lord. Loyalty unwavering
 I affirm without fear you will find in his heart.
¹⁵ The maker of this message commands me to bid thee,
 O bracelet-adorned one, to bring to thy mind
 And impress on thy heart the promises of love
 That ye two in the old days often exchanged
 While at home in your halls unharmed you might still
²⁰ Live in the land, love one another,
 Dwell in the same country. He was driven by feud
 From the powerful people. He prays now, most earnestly
 That you learn with delight you may launch on the sea-stream
 When from the height of the hill you hear from afar
²⁵ The melancholy call of the cuckoo in the wood.
 Let not thereafter any living man
 Prevent thy voyage or prevail against it.
 Seek now the shore, the sea-mew's home!
 Embark on the boat that bears thee south,
³⁰ Where far over the foam thou shalt find thy lord,—
 Where lingers thy lover in longing and hope.
 In the width of the world not a wish or desire
 More strongly stirs him (he instructs me to say)
 Than that gracious God should grant you to live
³⁵ Ever after at ease together,
 To distribute treasures to retainers and friends,
 To give rings of gold. Of gilded cups

[76]

And of proud possessions a plenty he has,
 And holds his home far hence with strangers,
 40 His fertile fields, where follow him many
 High-spirited heroes— though here my liege-lord,
 Forced by the fates, took flight on a ship
 And on the watery waves went forth alone
 To fare on the flood-way: fain would he escape,
 45 Stir up the sea-streams. By strife thy lord hath
 Won the fight against woe. No wish will he have
 For horses or jewels or the joys of mead-drinking,
 Nor any earl's treasures on earth to be found,
 O gentle lord's daughter, if he have joy in thee,
 50 As by solemn vows ye have sworn to each other.
 I set as a sign [S and R](#) together,
[E, A, W, and D](#), as an oath to assure you
 That he stays for thee still and stands by his troth;
 And as long as he lives it shall last unbroken,—
 55 Which often of old with oaths ye have plighted.

[77]

[1-6](#). The text here is so corrupt that an almost complete reconstruction has been necessary.

[51](#). In the manuscript these letters appear as runes. For illustrations of the appearance of runes, see the introductory note to "Cynewulf and his School," [p. 95, below](#). What these runes stood for, or whether they were supposed to possess unusual or magic power is purely a matter of conjecture.

[78]

THE RUIN

[Text used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*.

This description of a ruin with hot baths is generally assumed to be of the Roman city of Bath. The fact that the poet uses unusual words and unconventional lines seems to indicate that he wrote with his eye on the object.]

Wondrous is its wall-stone laid waste by the fates.
 The burg-steads are burst, broken the work of the giants.
 The roofs are in ruins, rotted away the towers,
 The fortress-gate fallen, with frost on the mortar.
 5 Broken are the battlements, low bowed and decaying,
 Eaten under by age. The earth holds fast
 The master masons: low mouldering they lie
 In the hard grip of the grave, till shall grow up and perish
 A hundred generations. Hoary and stained with red,
 10 Through conquest of kingdoms, unconquered this wall endured,
 Stood up under storm. The high structure has fallen.
 Still remains its wall-stone, struck down by weapons.
 They have fallen
[Ground](#) down by grim fate
 15 [Splendidly](#) it shone
[The](#) cunning creation
 [from](#) its clay covering is bent;
[Mind](#) the swift one drawn.
 The bold ones in counsel bound in rings
 19 The wall-foundations with wires, wondrously together.
 20 Bright were the burgher's homes, the bath halls many,
 Gay with high gables —a great martial sound,
 Many mead-halls, where men took their pleasure,
 Till an end came to all, through inexorable fate.
 The people all have perished; pestilence came on them:
 25 Death stole them all, the staunch band of warriors.
 Their proud works of war now lie waste and deserted;
 This fortress has fallen. Its defenders lie low,
 Its repairmen perished. Thus the palace stands dreary,
 And its purple expanse; despoiled of its tiles
 30 Is the roof of the dome. The ruin sank to earth,
 Broken in heaps —there where heroes of yore,
 Glad-hearted and gold-bedecked, in gorgeous array,
 Wanton with wine-drink in war-trappings shone:
 They took joy in jewels and gems of great price,
 35 In treasure untold and in topaz-stones,
 In the firm-built fortress of a far-stretching realm.
 The stone courts stood; hot streams poured forth,
 Wondrously welled out. The wall encompassed all
 In its bright embrace. Baths were there then,
 40 Hot all within —a healthful convenience.
 They let then pour

[79]

[80]

Over the hoary stones the heated streams,
Such as never were seen by our sires till then.
Hringmere was its name
⁴⁵ The baths were there then; then is
. That is a royal thing
In a house

14-18. The text is too corrupt to permit of reconstruction. A literal translation of the fragmentary lines has been given in order to show the student something of the loss we have suffered in not having the whole of this finely conceived lament for fallen grandeur. The line numbers are those of Kluge's text.

[83]

II. CHRISTIAN POETRY

1. CÆDMONIAN SCHOOL

[Concerning the man Cædmon, we have nothing but Bede's account in his *Ecclesiastical History* (see [p. 179 below](#)) and Cædmon's Hymn.

Genesis was first published in Amsterdam 1655, next in 1752. The first editions brought *Genesis* under Cædmon's name, because of Bede's account. There is, however, no such clue in the manuscript. The assignment of *Genesis* to Cædmon was questioned by Hicks as early as 1689. The Cædmonian authorship was defended in the early part of the nineteenth century by Conybeare and Thorpe. It is now agreed that all the Cædmonian Paraphrases are probably by different authors.

Cf. A. S. Cook, "The Name Cædmon," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vi, 9, and "Cædmon and the Ruthwell Cross," *Modern Language Notes*, v, 153.]

CÆDMON'S HYMN

[Text used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*.

Prose translation: Kennedy, *The Cædmon Poems*, p. xvii.

The poem is interesting in that it is found in two texts, the Northumbrian and the West Saxon. It is the only thing we have that was undoubtedly written by Cædmon.]

Now shall we praise the Prince of heaven,
The might of the Maker and his manifold thought,
The work of the Father: of what wonders he wrought
The Lord everlasting, when he laid out the worlds.
⁵ He first raised up for the race of men
The heaven as a roof, the holy Ruler.
Then the world below, the Ward of mankind,
The Lord everlasting, at last established
As a home for man, the Almighty Lord.
Primo cantavit Cædmon istud carmen.

[84]

6. The many synonyms (known as "kennings") make this passage impossible to translate into smooth English. This fact is true in a measure of all old English poetry, but it is especially the case with this hymn.

BEDE'S DEATH SONG

[Text used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*.

This poem was attributed to Bede, who died in 735, by his pupil, Cuthbert, who translated it into Latin. The Northumbrian version is in a manuscript at St. Gall.

These verses are examples of gnomic poetry, which was very popular in Old English literature. Miss Williams, in her *Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon* (Columbia University Press, 1914), p. 67, says that this is the earliest gnomic expression in Old English for which a definite date may be set.

Text criticism: Charlotte D'Evelyn, "Bede's Death Song," *Modern Language Notes*, xxx, 31.]

Before leaving this life there lives no one
Of men of wisdom who will not need
To consider and judge, ere he sets on his journey,
What his soul shall be granted of good or evil—
⁵ After his day of death what doom he shall meet.

1. Bede, the author of the *Ecclesiastical History of England*, was the greatest figure in the English church of the seventh and eighth centuries.

[85]

SELECTIONS FROM GENESIS

[The poem readily divides itself into two parts: *Genesis A*, the bulk of the poem, and *Genesis B*, lines 235-853. The latter is a

translation from the Old Saxon. The passage here translated is from *Genesis A*.

GENESIS A

Critical edition of *Genesis A*: F. Holthausen, *Die ältere Genesis*, Heidelberg, 1914.

Translation: C. W. Kennedy, *The Cædmon Poems*, New York, 1916, p. 7.

Partial translation: W. F. H. Bosanquet, *The Fall of Man or Paradise Lost of Cædmon*, London, 1869.

Date and place: Early eighth century; Northern England. The author was obviously acquainted with *Beowulf*.

Source: Vulgate Bible; first twenty-two chapters.]

THE OFFERING OF ISAAC

²⁸⁴⁵Then the powerful King put to the test
His trusted servant; tried him sorely
To learn if his love was lasting and certain.
With strongest words he sternly said to him:
"Hear me and hasten hence, O Abraham.
²⁸⁵⁰As thou leavest, lead along with thee
Thy own child Isaac! As an offering to me
Thyself shalt sacrifice thy son with thy hands.
When thy steps have struggled up the steep hill-side,
To the height of the land which from here I shall show you—
²⁸⁵⁵When thine own feet have climbed, there an altar erect me,
Build a fire for thy son; and thyself shalt kill him
With the edge of the sword as a sacrifice to me;
Let the black flame burn the body of that dear one."
He delayed not his going, but began at once
²⁸⁶⁰To prepare for departure: he was compelled to obey
The angel of the Lord, and he loved his God.
And then the faultless father Abraham
Gave up his night's rest; he by no means failed
To obey the Lord's bidding, but the blessed man
²⁸⁶⁵Girded his gray sword, God's spirit he showed
That he bore in his breast. His beasts then he fed,
This aged giver of gold. To go on the journey
Two young men he summoned: his son made the third;
He himself was the fourth. He set forward eagerly
²⁸⁷⁰From his own home and Isaac with him,
The child ungrown, as charged by his God.
Then he hurried ahead and hastened forth
Along the paths that the Lord had pointed,
The way through the waste; till the wondrous bright
²⁸⁷⁵Dawn of the third day over the deep water
Arose in radiance. Then the righteous man
Saw the hill-tops rise high around him,
As the holy Ruler of heaven had shown him.
Then Abraham said to his serving-men:
²⁸⁸⁰"O men of mine, remain here now
Quietly in this place! We shall quickly return
When we two have performed the task before us
Which the Sovereign of souls has assigned us to do."
The old man ascended with his own son
²⁸⁸⁵To the place which the Lord had appointed for them,
Went through the wealds; the wood Isaac carried—
His father the fire and the sword. Then first inquired
The boy young in winters, in these words of Abraham:
"Fire and sword, my father, we find here ready:
²⁸⁹⁰Where is the glorious offering which to God on the altar
Thou thinkest to bring and burn as a sacrifice?"
Abraham answered (he had only one thing
That he wished to perform, the will of the Father):
"The Sovereign of all himself shall find it,
²⁸⁹⁵As the Lord of men shall believe to be meet."
Up the steep hill struggled the stout-hearted man,
Leading the child as the Lord had charged,
Till climbing he came to the crest of the height,
To the place appointed by the powerful Lord,
²⁹⁰⁰Following the commands of his faithful Master.
He loaded the altar and lighted the fire,
And fettered fast the feet and hands
Of his beloved son and lifted upon it

[86]

[87]

The youthful Isaac, and instantly grasped
 2905 The sword by the hilt; his son he would kill
 With his hands as he promised and pour on the fire
 The gore of his kinsman. —Then God's servant,
 An angel of the Lord, to Abraham loudly
 Spoke with words. He awaited in quiet
 2910 The behests from on high and he hailed the angel.
 Then forthwith spoke from the spacious heavens
 The messenger of God, with gracious words:
 "Burn not thy boy, O blessed Abraham,
 Lift up the lad alive from the altar;
 2915 The God of Glory grants him his life!
 O man of the Hebrews, as meed for thy obedience,
 Through the holy hand of heaven's King,
 Thyself shall receive a sacred reward,
 A liberal gift: the Lord of Glory
 2920 Shall favor thee with fortune; his friendship shall be
 More sacred than thy son himself to thee."
 The altar still burned. Abraham was blessed
 By the King of mankind, the kinsman of Lot,
 With the grace of God, since he gave his son,
 2925 Isaac, alive. Then the aged man looked
 Around over his shoulder, and a ram he saw
 Not far away fastened alone
 In a bramble bush— [Haran's brother](#) saw it.
 Then Abraham seized it and set it on the altar
 2930 In eager haste for his own son.
 With his sword he smote it; as a sacrifice he adorned
 The reeking altar with the ram's hot blood,
 Gave to his God this gift and thanked him
 For all of the favors that before and after
 2935 The Lord had allowed him in his loving grace.

[89]

1. This selection is based directly on the biblical account of the offering of Isaac. The clearness with which the picture is visualized by the poet, and the fine restraint in the telling of the dramatic incident make this passage a fitting close for the paraphrase of Genesis.

[2928](#). *Haran*, the brother of Abraham, is mentioned in Genesis, 11:26, ff.

[90]

SELECTIONS FROM EXODUS

[Critical edition: Francis A. Blackburn, *Exodus and Daniel*, Boston and London, 1907, Belles-Lettres Series.

Translation: Kennedy, *The Cædmon Poems*, p. 99.

There can be no doubt that both *Exodus* and *Daniel* are by different hands from *Genesis A* or *Genesis B*, and they are themselves by different authors.]

THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

[When these words had been uttered](#) the army arose;
 300 Still stood the sea for the staunch warriors.
 The cohorts lifted their linden-shields,
 Their signals on the sand. The sea-wall mounted,
 Stood upright over Israel's legion,
 For day's time; then the doughty band
 305 Was of one mind. The wall of the sea-streams
 Held them unharmed in its hollow embrace.
[They](#) spurned not the speech nor despised its teaching,
[As](#) the wise man ended his words of exhorting
 And the noise diminished and mingled with the sound.
 310 Then the [fourth tribe](#) traveled foremost,
 Went into the waves, the warriors in a band
 Over the green ground; the goodly Jewish troop
 Struggled alone over the strange path
 Before their kinsmen. So the King of heaven
 315 For that day's work made deep reward,
 He gave them a great and glorious victory,
 That to them should belong the leadership
 In the kingdom, and triumph over their kinsmen and tribesmen.
 When they stepped on the sand, as a standard and sign
 320 A beacon they raised over the ranks of shields,
 Among the godly group, a golden lion,

[91]

The boldest of beasts over the bravest of peoples.
 At the hands of their enemy no dishonor or shame
 Would they deign to endure all the days of their life,
 325 While boldly in battle they might brandish their shields
 Against any people. The awful conflict,
 The fight was at the front, furious soldiers
 Wielding their weapons, warriors fearless,
 And bloody wounds, and wild battle-rushes,
 330 The jostling of helmets where the Jews advanced.
 Marching after the army were the eager [seamen](#),
 The sons of Reuben; raising their shields
 The sea-vikings bore them over the salt waves,
 A multitude of men; a mighty throng
 335 Went bravely forth. [The birthright of Reuben](#)
 [Was forfeited by his sins](#), so that he followed after
 In his comrade's track. In the tribes of the Hebrews,
 The blessings of the birthright his brother enjoyed,
 His riches and rank; yet Reuben was brave.
 340 Following him came the folk in crowds,
 The sons of Simeon in swarming bands,
 The third great host. With hoisted banners
 Over the watery path the war-troop pressed
 Dewy under their shafts. When daylight shone
 345 Over the brink of the sea, —the beacon of God,
 The bright morning,— the battle-lined marched.
 Each of the tribes traveled in order.
 At the head of the helmeted host was one man,
 Mightiest in majesty and most renowned;
 350 He led forward the folk as they followed the cloud,
 By tribes and by troops. Each truly knew
 The right of rank as arranged by Moses,
 Every man's order. They were all from one father.
 Their [sacred sire](#) received his [land-right](#),
 355 Wise in counsel, well-loved by his kinsmen.
 He gave birth to a brave, bold-hearted race,
 The sage patriarch to a sacred people,
 To the Children of Israel, the chosen of God.

[92]

.
 The folk were affrighted with fear of the ocean;
 Sad were their souls. The sea threatened death;
 The sides of the hill were soaked with blood;
 450 Gory was the flood, confusion on the waves,
 The water full of weapons; the wave-mist arose.
 The Egyptians turned and journeyed backward;
 They fled in fright; fear overtook them;
 Hurrying in haste their homes they sought;
 455 Their pride had fallen; they felt sweep over them
 The welling waters; not one returned
 Of the host to their homes, but behind they were locked
 By Wyrd in the waves. Where once was the path
 The breakers beat and bore down the army.
 460 The stream stood up; the storm arose
 High to the heavens, the harshest of noises.
 Dark grew the clouds. The doomed ones cried
 With fated voices; the foam became bloody.
 The sea-walls were scattered and the skies were lashed
 465 With the direst of deaths; the daring ones were slain,
 The princes in their pomp— they were past all help
 In the edge of the ocean. Their armor shone
 High over the hosts. Over the haughty ones poured
 The stream in its strength. Destroyed were the troop
 470 And fettered fast; they could find no escape.

[93]

.
 The Egyptians were
 For that day's work deeply punished,
 Because not any of the army ever came home;
 Of that mighty multitude there remained not a one
 510 Who could tell the tale of the traveling forth
 Who could announce in the cities the sorrowful news
 To the wives of the warriors of the woeful disaster.
 But the sea-death swallowed the sinful men,
 And their messengers too, in the midst of their power,
 515 And destroyed their pride, for they strove against God.

[94]

[299](#). Moses has just finished telling the children of Israel that he has been able to make the sea part its waves so that they may walk across unharmed.

[307, 308](#). This passage is obscure in meaning.

[310](#). The tribe of Judah lead the way. They are followed by the tribe of Reuben ([v. 331](#)) and then by the tribe of Simeon ([v. 340](#)). This order is perhaps taken from Numbers, chapter ii.

[331](#). The Children of Israel are called "sailors" in the poem, but no satisfactory explanation has been made of the usage.

[335, 336](#). See Genesis 49:4.

[354](#). This refers to God's promise to Abraham. See Genesis 15:18; 22:17.

[95]

2. CYNEWULF AND HIS SCHOOL

[Aside from Cædmon's Hymn, the only Old English poems whose author we know are four bearing the name of Cynewulf, *Christ*, *Juliana*, *Elene*, and *The Fates of the Apostles*. In these he signs his name by means of runes inserted in the manuscript. These runes, which are at once letters of the alphabet and words, are made to fit into the context. They are

HR + MPNTK.

Several other poems have been ascribed to Cynewulf, especially *Andreas*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *Guthlac*, *The Phoenix*, and *Judith*. Except for internal evidence there is no proof of the authorship of these poems. The Riddles were formerly thought to be by Cynewulf, but recent scholars have, with one notable exception, abandoned that theory.

Many reconstructions of the life of Cynewulf have been undertaken. The most reasonable theories seem to be that he was Cynewulf, Bishop of Lindisfarne, who died about 781; or that he was a priest, Cynewulf, who executed a decree in 803. There is no real proof that either of these men was the poet. For a good discussion of the Cynewulf question, see Strunk, *Juliana*, pp. xvii-xix, and Kennedy, *The Poems of Cynewulf*, Introduction.

Of the signed poems of Cynewulf, selections are here given from *Christ* and *Elene*.]

a. CYNEWULF

SELECTIONS FROM THE CHRIST

[Critical edition: Cook, *The Christ of Cynewulf*, Boston, 1900. Text and translation: Gollancz, *Cynewulf's Christ*, London, 1892. Translation: Kennedy, *The Poems of Cynewulf*, pp. 153, ff. The poem consists of three parts:

1. Advent, largely from the Roman breviary.
2. Ascension, taken from an Ascension sermon of Pope Gregory.
3. Second coming of Christ, taken from an alphabetical Latin hymn on the Last Judgment, quoted by Bede.

Is there enough unity to make us consider it one work? Cook thinks we can. The differences in the language and meter are not so striking as to make it unlikely. The great objection to it is that the runes occur at the end of the second part, which is not far from the middle of the entire poem. In the three other poems signed by Cynewulf the runes occur near the end.]

[96]

1. HYMN TO CHRIST

. to the King.
Thou art the wall-stone that the workmen of old
Rejected from the work. Well it befits thee
To become the head of the kingly hall,
5 To join in one the giant walls
In thy fast embrace, the flint unbroken;
That through all the earth every eye may see
And marvel evermore, O mighty Prince,
Declare thy accomplishments through the craft of thy hand,
10 Truth-fast, triumphant, and untorn from its place
Leave wall against wall. For the work it is needful
That the Craftsman should come and the King himself
And raise that roof that lies ruined and decayed,
Fallen from its frame. He formed that body,
15 The Lord of life, and its limbs of clay,
And shall free from foemen the frightened in heart,
The downcast band, as he did full oft.
.

2. HYMN TO JERUSALEM

50 [O](#) vision of happiness! holy Jerusalem!
[Fairest of king's thrones!](#) fortress of Christ!
The home-seat of angels, where the holy alone,

The souls of the righteous, shall find rest unceasing,
 Exulting in triumph. No trace of sin
 55 Shall be made manifest in that mansion of bliss,
 But all faults shall flee afar from thee,
 All crime and conflict; thou art covered with glory
 Of highest hope, as thy holy name showest.
 Cast now thy gaze on the glorious creation,
 60 How around thee the roomy roof of heaven
 Looks on all sides, how the Lord of Hosts
 Seeks thee in his course and comes himself,
 And adopts thee to dwell in, as in days ago
 In words of wisdom the wise men said,
 65 Proclaimed Christ's birth as a comfort to thee,
 Thou choicest of cities! Now the child has come,
 Born to make worthless the work of the Hebrews.
 He bringeth thee bliss; thy bonds he unlooseth;
 He striveth for the stricken; understandeth their
 needs,—
 70 How woeful men must wait upon mercy.

1. This poem begins in the fragmentary manner indicated by the translation.

2. See Psalms 118:22.

3. JOSEPH AND MARY

[Mary] "[O my Joseph](#), O Jacob's son,
 165 Kinsman of David, the king renowned,
 Dost thou plan to turn from thy plighted troth,
 And leave my love?"

[98]

[Joseph] "Alas, full soon

I am oppressed with grief and deprived of honor.
 I have borne for thee many bitter words,
 170 Insulting slurs and sorrowful taunts,
 Scathing abuses, and they scorn me now
 In wrathful tones. My tears I shall pour
 In sadness of soul. My sorrowful heart,
 My grief full easily our God may heal,
 175 And not leave me forlorn. Alas, young damsel,
 Mary maiden!"

[Mary] "Why bemoanest thou

And bitterly weepst? No blame in thee,
 Nor any fault have I ever found
 For wicked works, and this word thou speakest
 180 As if thou thyself with sinful deeds
 And faults wert filled."

[Joseph] "Far too much grief

Thy conception has caused me to suffer in shame.
 How can I bear their bitter taunts
 Or ever make answer to my angry foes
 185 Who wish me woe? 'Tis widely known
 That I took from the glorious temple of God
 A beautiful virgin of virtue unblemished,
 The chastest of maidens, but a change has now come,
 Though I know not the cause. Nothing avails me—
 190 To speak or to be silent. If I say the truth,
 Then the daughter of David shall die for her crime,
 Struck down with stones; yet still it were harder
 To conceal the sin; forsworn forever
 I should live my life loathed by all people,
 195 By men reviled." Then the maid revealed
 The work of wonder, and these words she spoke:
 "Truly I say, by the Son of the Creator
 The Savior of souls, the Son of God,
 I tell thee in truth that the time has not been
 200 That the embrace of a mortal man I have known
 On all the earth; but early in life
 This grace was granted me, that Gabriel came,
 The high angel of heaven, and hailed me in greeting,
 In truthful speech: that the Spirit of heaven
 With his light should illumine me, that life's Glory by me
 205 Should be borne, the bright Son, the blessed Child of God,

[99]

Of the kingly Creator. I am become now his temple,
 Unspoiled and spotless; the Spirit of comfort
 Hath his dwelling in me. Endure now no longer
 Sorrow and sadness, and say eternal thanks
 210 To the mighty Son of the Maker, that his mother I have become,
 Though a maid I remain, and in men's opinion
 Thou art famed as his father, if fulfillment should come
 Of the truth that the Prophets foretold of his coming."

.

164. This passage is especially interesting in being one of the first appearances of the dialogue form in old English. Some scholars have gone so far as to think that we have here the germ from which English drama comes, but there does not seem reason to believe that the scene ever received any kind of dramatic representation.

[100]

4. RUNE PASSAGE

Not ever on earth need any man
 780 Have dread of the darts of the devil's race,
 Of the fighting of the fiends, whose defense is in God,
 The just Lord of Hosts. The judgment is nigh
 When each without fail shall find his reward,
 Of weal or of woe, for his work on the earth
 785 During the time of his life. 'Tis told us in books,
 How from on high the humble one came,
 The Treasure-hoard of honor, to the earth below
 In the Virgin's womb, the valiant Son of God,
 Holy from on high. I hope in truth
 790 And also dread the doom far sterner,
 When Christ and his angels shall come again,
 Since I kept not closely the counsels my Savior
 Bade in his books. I shall bear therefore
 To see the work of sin (it shall certainly be)
 795 When many shall be led to meet their doom,
 To receive justice in the sight of their Judge.
 Then the Courageous shall tremble, shall attend the King,
 The Righteous Ruler, when his wrath he speaks
 To the worldlings who weakly his warning have heeded
 800 While their Yearning and Need even yet could have easily
 Found a comfort. There, cowering in fear,
 Many wearily shall wait on the wide plain
 What doom shall be dealt them for the deeds of their life,
 Of angry penalties. Departed hath Winsomeness,
 805 The ornaments of earth. It Used to be true
 That long our Life-joys were locked in the sea-streams,
 Our Fortunes on earth; in the fire shall our treasure
 Burn in the blast; brightly shall mount,
 The red flame, raging and wrathfully striding
 810 Over the wide world; wasted shall be the plains;
 The castles shall crumble; then shall climb the swift fire,
 The greediest of guests, grimly and ruthlessly
 Eat the ancient treasure that of old men possessed
 While still on the earth was their strength and their pride.
 815 Hence I strive to instruct each steadfast man
 That he be cautious in the care of his soul,
 And not pour it forth in pride in that portion of days
 That the Lord allows him to live in the world,
 While the soul abideth safe in the body,
 820 In that friendly home. It behooveth each man
 To bethink him deeply in the days of his life
 How meekly and mildly the mighty Lord
 Came of old to us by an angel's word;
 Yet grim shall he be when again he cometh,
 825 Harsh and righteous. Then the heavens shall rock,
 And the measureless ends of the mighty earth
 Shall tremble in terror. The triumphant King
 Shall avenge their vain and vicious lives,
 Their loathsome wickedness. Long shall they wallow
 830 With heavy hearts in the heat of the fire bath,
 Suffer for their sins in its surging flame.

[101]

[102]

779. The passage following contains the runes from which we obtain the name Cynewulf. The runes are at once a word and a letter, in the same way that our letter *I* is also the symbol for the first personal pronoun. In the places where the meaning fits,

Cynewulf has written the runes that spell his name.

[804](#). In this passage the runes omit the *e* of the poet's name, although it is found in the other runic passages.

[103]

SELECTIONS FROM THE ELENE

[Critical edition: Holthausen, *Kynewulf's Elene*, Heidelberg, 1905.

Translation: Kennedy, *The Poems of Cynewulf*, pp. 87 ff.; Kemble, *The Poetry of the Codex Vercelliensis*, with an English translation, London, 1856.

Source: *Acta Sanctorum* for May 4.

The first passage describes the vision of the cross by the Emperor Constantine, the second the finding of the true cross by his mother, Helena, in Old English, "Elene."

The poem is usually regarded as Cynewulf's masterpiece.]

1. THE VISION OF THE CROSS

. Heart-care oppressed
The Roman ruler; of his realm he despaired;
He was lacking in fighters; too few were his warriors,
His close comrades to conquer in battle
⁶⁵ Their eager enemy. The army encamped,
Earls about their ætheling, at the edge of the stream,
Where they spread their tents for the space of the
night,
After first they had found their foes approach.
To Cæsar himself in his sleep there came
⁷⁰ A dream as he lay with his doughty men,
To the valiant king a vision appeared:
It seemed that he saw a soldier bright,
Glorious and gleaming in the guise of a man
More fair of form than before or after
⁷⁵ He had seen under the skies. From his sleep he awoke,
Hastily donned his helmet. The herald straightway,
The resplendent messenger spoke unto him,
Named him by name —the night vanished away:
"O Constantine, the King of angels bids—
⁸⁰ The Master Almighty, to make thee a compact,
The Lord of the faithful. No fear shouldst thou have,
Though foreign foes bring frightful war,
And horrors unheard of! To heaven now look,
To the Guardian of glory: Thou shalt gain there support,
⁸⁵ The sign of victory!"
Soon was he ready
To obey the holy bidding, and unbound his heart,
And gazed on high, as the herald had bade him,
The princely Peace-weaver. With precious jewels adorned,
He saw the radiant rood over the roof of clouds,
⁹⁰ Gorgeous with gold and gleaming gems.
The brilliant beam bore these letters
Shining with light: "[Thou shalt with this sign](#)
[Overcome](#) and conquer in thy crying need
The fearsome foe." Then faded the light,
⁹⁵ And joining the herald, journeyed on high
Unto the clean-hearted company. The king was the blither,
And suffered in his soul less sorrow and anguish,
The valiant victor, through the vision fair.

.

[104]

[92](#). This is a translation of the famous Latin motto *in hoc signo vinces*.

[105]

2. THE DISCOVERY OF THE CROSS

[Striving](#) in strength and with steadfast heart,
⁸³⁰ He began to delve for the glorious tree
Under its covering of turf, till at twenty feet
Below the surface concealed he found
Shut out from sight, under the shelving cliff,
In the chasm of darkness —three crosses he found,
In their gloomy grave together he found them,—

835 Grimy all over, as in ancient days
 The unrighteous race had wrapped them in earth,
 The sinful Jews. Against the Son of God
 They showed their hate as they should not have done
 Had they not harkened to the behests of the devil.
 840 Then blithe was his heart and blissful within him.
 His soul was inspired by the sacred tree.
 His heart was emboldened when he beheld that beacon
 Holy and deep hidden. With his hands he seized
 The radiant cross of heaven, and with his host he raised it
 845 From its grave in the earth. The guests from afar
 And princes and æthelings went all to the town.
 In her sight they set the three sacred trees,
 The proud valiant men, plain to be seen
 Before Elene's knee. And now was joy
 850 In the heart of the Queen; she inquired of the men
 On which of the crosses the crucified Lord,
 The heavenly Hope-giver, hung in pain:
 "Lo! we have heard from the holy books
 It told for a truth that two of them
 855 Suffered with him and himself was the third
 On the hallowed tree. The heavens were darkened
 In that terrible time. Tell, if you can,
 On which of these roods the Ruler of angels,
 The Savior of men suffered his death.
 860 In no wise could Judas —for he knew not at all—
 Clearly reveal that victory tree
 On which the Lord was lifted high,
 The son of God, but they set, by his order,
 In the very middle of the mighty city
 865 The towering trees to tarry there,
 Till the Almighty King should manifest clearly
 Before the multitude the might of that marvelous rood.
 The assembly sat, their song uplifted;
 They mused in their minds on the mystery trees
 870 Until the ninth hour when new delight grew
 Through a marvelous deed. —There a multitude came,
 Of folk not a little, and, lifted among them,
 There was borne on a bier by brave-hearted men
 Nigh to the spot —it was the ninth hour—
 875 A lifeless youth. Then was lifted the heart
 Of Judas in great rejoicing and gladness.
 He commanded them to set the soulless man,
 With life cut off, the corpse on the earth,
 Bereft of life, and there was raised aloft
 880 By the proclaimer of justice, the crafty of heart,
 The trusty in counsel, two of the crosses
 Over that house of death. It was dead as before
 The body fast to the bier: about the chill limbs
 Was grievous doom. Then began the third cross
 885 To be lifted aloft. There lay the body,
 Until above him was reared the rood of the Lord,
 The holy cross of heaven's King,
 The sign of salvation. He soon arose
 With spirit regained, and again were joined
 890 Body and soul. Unbounded was the praise
 And fair of the folk. The Father they thanked
 And the true and sacred Son of the Almighty
 With gracious words. —Glory and praise be his
 Always without end from every creature.

[106]

[107]

829. After Constantine has accepted Christianity, his mother Helena (Elene) undertakes a pilgrimage to the Holy Land for the purpose of discovering the true cross. After many failures she finally learns where it is hidden. The passage here translated relates the discovery of the cross.

[108]

b. ANONYMOUS POEMS OF THE CYNEWULFIAN SCHOOL

THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

[Critical edition: Cook, *The Dream of the Rood*, Oxford, 1905.

Author: "Making all due allowance, then, for the weakness of certain arguments both pro and con, the balance of probability seems to incline decidedly in favor of Cynewulfian authorship."—Cook.

The poem has much in common with *Elene*, especially the intimate self-analysis. Portions of it are on the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire. It is claimed as Cynewulf's, but there is nothing to indicate this except the beauty of style, which has caused it to be called "the choicest blossom of Old English Christian poetry."]

Lo, I shall tell you the truest of visions,
A dream that I dreamt in the dead of night
While people reposed in peaceful sleep.
I seemed to see the sacred tree
5 Lifted on high in a halo of light,
The brightest of beams; that beacon was wholly
Gorgeous with gold; glorious gems stood
Fair at the foot; and five were assembled,
At the crossing of the arms. The angels of God looked on,
10 Fair through the firmament. It was truly no foul sinner's cross,
For beholding his sufferings were the holy spirits,
The men of the earth and all of creation.
Wondrous was that victory-wood, and I wounded and stained
With sorrows and sins. I saw the tree of glory [109]
15 Blessed and bright in brilliant adornments,
Made joyous with jewels. Gems on all sides
Full rarely enriched the rood of the Savior.
Through the sight of that cross I came to perceive
Its stiff struggle of old, when it started first
20 To bleed on the right side. I was broken and cast down with sorrow;
The fair sight inspired me with fear. Before me the moving beacon
Changed its clothing and color. At times it was covered with blood
Fearful and grimy with gore. At times with gold 'twas adorned.
Then I lay and looked for a long time
25 And saw the Savior's sorrowful tree
Until I heard it lift high its voice.
The worthiest of the wood-race formed words and spoke:
"It was ages ago —I shall always remember—
When first I was felled at the forest's edge,
30 My strong trunk stricken. Then strange enemies took me
And fashioned my frame to a cross; and their felons I raised on high.
On their backs and shoulders they bore me to the brow of the lofty hill.
There the hated ones solidly set me. I saw there the Lord of Mankind
Struggling forward with courage to climb my sturdy trunk. [110]
35 I dared not then oppose the purpose of the Lord,
So I bent not nor broke when there burst forth a trembling
From the ends of the earth. Easily might I
Destroy the murderers, but I stood unmoved.
"The Young Hero unclothed him —it was the holy God—
40 Strong and steadfast; he stepped to the high gallows,
Not fearing the look of the fiends, and there he freed mankind.
At his blessed embrace I trembled, but bow to the earth I dared not,
Or forward to fall to the ground, but fast and true I endured.
As a rood I was raised up; a royal King I bore,
45 The Lord of heavenly legions. I allowed myself never to bend.
Dark nails through me they drove; so that dastardly scars are upon me,
Wounds wide open; but not one of them dared I to harm.
They cursed and reviled us together. I was covered all over with blood,
That flowed from the Savior's side when his soul had left the flesh. [111]
50 Sorrowful the sights I have seen on that hill,
Grim-visaged grief: the God of mankind I saw
And his frightful death. The forces of darkness
Covered with clouds the corpse of the Lord,
The shining radiance; the shadows darkened
55 Under the cover of clouds. Creation all wept,
The king's fall bewailed. Christ was on the rood.
Finally from afar came faithful comrades
To the Savior's side, and I saw it all.
Bitter the grief that I bore, but I bowed me low to their hands;
60 My travail was grievous and sore. They took then God Almighty,
From loathsome torment they lifted him. The warriors left me deserted,
To stand stained with blood. I was stricken and wounded with nails.
Limb-weary they laid him there, and at their Lord's head they stood.
They beheld there the Ruler of heaven; and they halted a while to rest,
65 Tired after the terrible struggle. A tomb then they began to make,
His friends in sight of his foes. Of the fairest of stone they built it,
And set their Savior upon it. A sorrowful dirge they chanted, [112]
Lamented their Master at evening, when they made their journey home,
Tired from their loved Lord's side. And they left him with the guard.

70 We crosses stood there streaming with blood,
 And waited long after the wailing ceased
 Of the brave company. The body grew cold,
 The most precious of corpses. Then they pulled us down,
 All to the earth —an awful fate!
 75 They buried us low in a pit. But the loved disciples of Christ,
 His faithful friends made search and found me and brought me to light,
 And gorgeously decked me with gold and with silver.
 “Now mayst thou learn, my beloved friend,
 That the work of the wicked I have worthily borne,
 80 The most trying of torments. The time is now come
 When through the wide world I am worshipped and honored,
 That all manner of men, and the mighty creation,
 Hold sacred this sign. On me the Son of God
 Death-pangs endured. Hence, dauntless in glory,
 85 I rise high under heaven, and hold out salvation
 To each and to all who have awe in my presence.
 “Long ago I was the greatest and most grievous of torments,
 Most painful of punishments, till I pointed aright
 The road of life for the race of men. [113]

90 “Lo, a glory was given by the God of Creation
 To the worthless wood —by the Warden of heaven—
 Just as Mary, his mother, the maiden blessed,
 Received grace and glory from God Almighty,
 And homage and worship over other women.
 95 “And now I bid thee, my best of comrades,
 That thou reveal this vision to men.
 Tell them I am truly the tree of glory,
 That the Savior sorrowed and suffered upon me
 For the race of men and its many sins,
 100 And the ancient evil that Adam wrought.
 “He there tasted of death; but in triumph he rose,
 The Lord in his might and gave life unto men.
 Then he ascended to heaven, and hither again
 Shall the Savior descend to seek mankind
 105 On the day of doom, the dreaded Ruler
 Of highest heaven, with his host of angels.
 Then will he adjudge with justice and firmness
 Rewards to the worthy whose works have deserved them,
 Who loyally lived their lives on the earth.
 110 Then a feeling of fear shall fill every heart
 For the warning they had in the words of their Master:
 He shall demand of many where the man may be found
 To consent for the sake of his Savior to taste
 The bitter death as He did on the cross. [114]

115 They are filled with fear and few of them think
 What words they shall speak in response to Christ.
 Then no feeling of fright or fear need he have
 Who bears on his heart the brightest of tokens,
 But there shall come to the kingdom through the cross and its power
 120 All the souls of the saved from the sorrows of earth,
 Of the holy who hope for a home with their Lord.”
 Then I adored the cross with undaunted courage,
 With the warmest zeal, while I watched alone
 And saw it in secret. My soul was eager
 125 To depart on its path, but I have passed through many
 An hour of longing. Through all my life
 I shall seek the sight of that sacred tree
 Alone more often than all other men
 And worthily worship it. My will for this service
 130 Is steadfast and sturdy, and my strength is ever
 In the cross of Christ. My comrades of old,
 The friends of fortune, all far from the earth
 Have departed from the world and its pleasures and have passed to the King of Glory,
 And high in the heavens with the holy God
 135 Are living eternally. And I long for the time
 To arrive at last when the rood of the Lord,
 Which once so plainly appeared to my sight,
 Shall summon my soul from this sorrowful life,
 And bring me to that bourne where bliss is unending
 140 And happiness of heaven, where the holy saints
 All join in a banquet, where joy is eternal.
 May He set me where always in after time
 I shall dwell in glory with God’s chosen ones
 In delights everlasting. May the Lord be my friend,

¹⁴⁵ Who came to earth and of old on the cross
 Suffered and sorrowed for the sins of men.
 He broke there our bonds and bought for us life
 And a heavenly home. The hearts were now filled
 With blessings and bliss, which once burned with remorse.
¹⁵⁰ To the Son was his journey successful and joyful
 And crowned with triumph, when he came with his troops,
 With his gladsome guests into God's kingdom,
 The Almighty Judge's, and brought joy to the angels,
 And the host of the holy who in heaven before
¹⁵⁵ Dwelt in glory when their God arrived,
 The Lord Most High, at his home at last.

[39](#). The lines that follow appear with some changes on the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire.

[44](#). This and the following line form the basis of an inscription on a reliquary containing a cross preserved in the Cathedral at Brussels.

[116]

JUDITH

[Critical edition: Cook, *Judith*, Boston, 1904.

Translation: *Hall, Judith, Phoenix and Other Anglo-Saxon Poems*.

Manuscript: The same as the one containing *Beowulf*. It was injured by a fire in 1731. It had been printed by Thwaites in 1698 before the injury.

Authorship and date: The mixture of dialect forms seems to indicate that a northern original passed through one or more hands and that at least the last scribe belonged to the late West Saxon period. Cook thinks that it is not earlier than about 825 nor later than 937, and that it is possibly by Cynewulf.

Source: Apocryphal book of Judith.]

1. THE FEAST

. [She](#) doubted [not] the gifts
 In this wide world. There worthily she found
 Help at the hands of the Lord, when she had the highest need,
 Grace from God on high, that against the greatest of dangers
⁵ The Lord of Hosts should protect her; for this the Heavenly Father
 Graciously granted her wish, for she had given true faith
 To the holy Ruler of heaven.

Holofernes then, I am told,
 Called his warriors to a wine-feast and a wondrous and glorious
 Banquet prepared. To this the prince of men
¹⁰ Bade the bravest of thanes. Then with bold haste
 To the powerful prince came the proud shield-warriors,
 Before the chief of the folk. That was the fourth day
 Since the gentle Judith, just in her thoughts,
 Of fairy-like beauty, was brought to the king.
¹⁵ Then they sought the assembly to sit at the banquet,
 Proud to the wine-pouring, all his partners in woe,
 Bold burnie-warriors. Bowls large and deep
 Were borne along the benches; beakers also and flagons
 Full to the feasters. Fated they drank it,
²⁰ Renowned shield-knights, though he knew not their doom,
 The hateful lord of heroes. Holofernes, the king,
 Bestower of jewels, took joy in the wine-pouring,
 Howled and hurled forth a hideous din
 That the folk of the earth from afar might hear
²⁵ How the stalwart and strong-minded stormed and bellowed,
 Maddened by mead-drink; he demanded full oft
 That the brave bench-sitters should bear themselves well.
 So the hellish demon through the whole of the day
 Drenched with drink his dear companions,
³⁰ The cruel gold-king, till unconscious they lay,
 All drunk his doughty ones, as if in death they were slain,
 Every good gone from them.

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[1](#). Although the fragment begins in the middle of a line, it presents the appearance of being practically complete. Certainly, as it stands it makes an artistic whole: we begin and end the poem by showing how Judith was favored of God. Within a very short space after the opening lines we are in the midst of the action: Judith has come from her beleaguered city of Bethulia and enchanted Holofernes by her beauty, and Holofernes has finished his great feast by summoning her to him. All this is put before us in the first 37 lines. The rest of the poem is vividly conceived, from the slaying of the Assyrian king to the final victory and

rejoicing.

2. THE SLAYING OF HOLOFERNES

He gave then commands

To serve the hall-sitters till descending upon them
Dark night came near. The ignoble one ordered
35 The blessed maiden, burdened with jewels,
Freighted with rings, to be fetched in all haste
To his hated bedside. His behest they performed,
His corps of retainers —the commands of their lord,
Chief of the champions. Cheerfully they stepped
40 To the royal guest-room, where full ready they found
The queenly Judith, and quickly then
The goodly knights began to lead
The holy maiden to the high tent,
Where the rich ruler rested always,
45 Lay him at night, loathsome to God,
Holofernes. There hung an all-golden
Radiant fly-net around the folk-chief's
Bed embroidered; so that the baleful one,
The loathed leader, might look unhindered
50 On everyone of the warrior band
Who entered in, and on him none
Of the sons of men, unless some of his nobles,
Contrivers of crime, he called to his presence:
His barons to bring him advice. Then they bore to his rest
55 The wisest of women; went then the strong-hearted band
To make known to their master that the maiden of God
Was brought to his bower. Then blithe was the chief in his heart,
The builder of burg-steads; the bright maiden he planned
With loathsome filth to defile, but the Father of heaven knew
60 His purpose, the Prince of goodness and with power he restrained him,
God, the Wielder of Glory. Glad then the hateful one
Went with his riotous rout of retainers
Baleful to his bedside, where his blood should be spilled
Suddenly in a single night. Full surely his end approached
65 On earth ungentle, even as he lived,
Stern striver for evil, while still in this world
He dwelt under the roof of the clouds. Drunken with wine then he fell
In the midst of his regal rest so that he recked not of counsel
In the chamber of his mind; the champions stepped
70 Out of his presence and parted in haste,
The wine-sated warriors who went with the false one,
And the evil enemy of man ushered to bed
For the last time.

Then the Lord's servant

The mighty hand-maiden, was mindful in all things
75 How she most easily from the evil contriver
His life might snatch ere the lecherous deceiver,
The creature crime-laden awoke. The curly-locked maiden
Of God then seized the sword well ground,
Sharp from the hammers, and from its sheath drew it
80 With her right hand; heaven's Guardian she began
To call by name, Creator of all
The dwellers in the world, and these words she spoke:
"O Heavenly God, and Holy Ghost,
Son of the Almighty, I will seek from Thee
85 Thy mercy unfailing to defend me from evil,
O Holiest Trinity. Truly for me now
Full sore is my soul and sorrowful my heart,
Tormented with griefs. Grant me, Lord of the skies,
Success and soundness of faith, that with this sword I may
90 Behead this hideous monster. Heed my prayer for salvation,
Noble Lord of nations; never have I had
More need of thy mercy; mighty Lord, avenge now
Bright-minded Bringer of glory, that I am thus baffled in spirit,
Heated in heart." Her then the greatest of Judges
95 With dauntless daring inspired, as he doth ever to all
The sons of the Spirit who seek him for help,
With reason and with right belief. Then was to the righteous in mind,
Holy hope renewed; the heathen man then she took,
And held by his hair; with her hands she drew him
100 Shamefully toward her, and the traitorous deceiver

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[121]

Laid as she listed, most loathsome of men,
 In order that easily the enemy's body
 She might wield at her will. The wicked one she slew,
 The curly-locked maiden with her keen-edged sword,
 105 Smote the hateful-hearted one till she half cut through
 Severing his neck, so that swooning he lay
 Drunken and death-wounded. Not dead was he yet,
 Nor lifeless entirely: the triumphant lady
 More earnestly smote the second time
 110 The heathen hound, so that his head was thrown
 Forth on the floor; foul lay the carcass,
 Bereft of a soul; the spirit went elsewhere
 Under the burning abyss where abandoned it lay,
 Tied down in torment till time shall cease,
 115 With serpents bewound, amid woes and tortures,
 All firmly fixed in the flames of hell,
 When death came upon him. He durst not hope,
 Enveloped in blackness, to venture forth ever
 From that dreary hole, but dwell there he shall
 120 Forever and aye till the end of time,
 In that hideous home without hope of joy.

[122]

52. Here begins a series of extended lines which some critics think are intended to lend an air of solemnity to the passage. A study of the occurrence of these long lines in this and other poems, such as *The Wanderer*, *The Charms*, or *Widsith*, does not seem to bear out this contention. Usually these long lines have three accents in each half. The rules for the alliteration are the same as for the short verses.

3. THE RETURN TO BETHULIA

Great was the glory then gained in the fight
 By Judith at war, through the will of God,
 The mighty Master, who permitted her victory.
 125 Then the wise-minded maiden immediately threw
 The heathen warrior's head so bloody,
 Concealed it in the sack that her servant had brought—
 The pale-faced woman, polished in manners—
 Which before she had filled with food for them both.
 130 Then the gory head gave she to her goodly maid-servant
 To bear to their home, to her helper she gave it,
 To her junior companion. Then they journeyed together,
 Both of the women, bold in their daring,
 The mighty in mind, the maidens exultant,
 135 Till they had wholly escaped from the host of the enemy,
 And could full clearly catch the first sight
 Of their sacred city and see the walls
 Of bright Bethulia. Then the bracelet-adorned ones,
 Traveling on foot, went forth in haste,
 140 Until they had journeyed, with joy in their hearts,
 To the wall-gate.

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The warriors sat
 Unwearied in watching, the wardens on duty,
 Fast in the fortress, as the folk erstwhile,
 The grieved ones of mind, by the maiden were counselled,
 145 By the wary Judith, when she went on her journey,
 The keen-witted woman. She had come once more,
 Dear to her people, the prudent in counsel.
 She straightway summoned certain of the heroes
 From the spacious city speedily to meet her
 150 And allow her to enter without loss of time
 Through the gate of the wall, and these words she spoke
 To the victor-tribe:
 "I may tell to you now
 Noteworthy news, that you need no longer
 Mourn in your mind, for the Master is kind to you,
 155 The Ruler of nations. It is known afar
 Around the wide world that you have won glory;
 Very great victory is vouchsafed in return
 For all the evils and ills you have suffered."
 Blithe then became the burghers within,
 160 When they heard how the Holy Maid spoke
 Over the high wall. The warriors rejoiced;
 To the gate of the fortress the folk then hastened,
 Wives with their husbands, in hordes and in bands,

In crowds and in companies; they crushed and thronged
¹⁶⁵ Towards the handmaid of God by hundreds and thousands,
 Old ones and young ones. All of the men
 In the goodly city were glad in their hearts
 At the joyous news that Judith was come
 Again to her home, and hastily then
¹⁷⁰ With humble hearts the heroes received her.
 Then gave the gold-adorned, sagacious in mind,
 Command to her comrade, her co-worker faithful
 The heathen chief's head to hold forth to the people,
 To the assembly to show as a sign and a token,
¹⁷⁵ All bloody to the burghers, how in battle they sped.
 To the famed victory-folk the fair maiden spoke:
 "O proudest of peoples, princely protectors,
 Gladly now gaze on the gory face,
 On the hated head of the heathen warrior,
¹⁸⁰ Holofernes, wholly life-bereft,
 Who most of all men contrived murder against us,
 The sorest of sorrows, and sought even yet
 With greater to grind us, but God would not suffer him
 Longer to live, that with loathsomest evils
¹⁸⁵ The proud one should oppress us; I deprived him of life
 Through the grace of God. Now I give commands
 To you citizens bold, you soldiers brave-hearted,
 Protectors of the people, to prepare one and all
 Forthwith for the fight. When first from the east
¹⁹⁰ The King of creation, the kindest of Lords,
 Sends the first beams of light, bring forth your linden-shields,
 Boards for your breasts and your burnie-corselets,
 Your bright-hammered helmets to the hosts of the scathers,
 To fell the folk-leaders, the fated chieftains,
¹⁹⁵ With your fretted swords. Your foes are all
 Doomed to the death, and dearly-won glory
 Shall be yours in battle, as the blessed Creator
 The mighty Master, through me has made known."

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4. THE BATTLE

Then a band of bold knights busily gathered,
²⁰⁰ Keen men at the conflict; with courage they stepped forth,
 Bearing banners, brave-hearted companions,
 And fared to the fight, forth in right order,
 Heroes under helmets from the holy city
 At the dawning of day; dinned forth their shields
²⁰⁵ A loud-voiced alarm. [Now listened in joy](#)
 The lank wolf in the wood and the wan raven,
 Battle-hungry bird, both knowing well
 That the gallant people would give to them soon
 A feast on the fated; now flew on their track
²¹⁰ The deadly devourer, the dewy-winged eagle,
 Singing his war-song, the swart-coated bird,
 The horned of beak. Then hurried the warriors,
 Keen for the conflict, covered with shields,
 With hollow lindens— they who long had endured
²¹⁵ The taunts and the tricks of the treacherous strangers,
 The host of the heathen; hard was it repaid now
 To all the Assyrians, every insult revenged,
 At the shock of the shields, when the shining-armed Hebrews
 Bravely to battle marched under banners of war
²²⁰ To face the foeman. Forthwith then they
 Sharply shot forth showers of arrows,
 Bitter battle-adders from their bows of horn,
 Hurled straight from the string; stormed and raged loudly
 The dauntless avengers; darts were sent whizzing
²²⁵ Into the hosts of the hardy ones. Heroes were angry
 The dwellers in the land, at the dastardly race.
 Strong-hearted they stepped, stern in their mood;
 On their enemies of old took awful revenge,
 On their mead-weary foes. With the might of their hands
²³⁰ Their shining swords from their sheaths they drew forth.
 With the choicest of edges the champions they smote—
 Furiously felled the folk of Assyria,
 The spiteful despoilers. They spared not a one
 Of the hated host, neither high nor low

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²³⁵ Of living men that they might overcome.
 So the kinsmen-companions at the coming of morning
 Followed the foemen, fiercely attacking them,
 Till, pressed and in panic, the proud ones perceived
 That the chief and the champions of the chosen people

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²⁴⁰ With the swing of the sword swept all before them,
 The wise Hebrew warriors. Then word they carried
 To the eldest officers over the camp,
 Ran with the wretched news, arousing the leaders,
 Fully informed them of the fearful disaster,
²⁴⁵ Told the merry mead-drinkers of the morning encounter
 Of the horrible edge-play. I heard then suddenly
 The slaughter-fated men from sleep awakened
 And toward the bower-tent of the baleful chief,
 Holofernes, they hastened: in hosts they crowded,
²⁵⁰ Thickly they thronged. One thought had they only,
 Their lasting loyalty to their lord to show,
 Before in their fury they fell upon him,
 The host of the Hebrews. The whole crowd imagined
 That the lord of despoilers and the spotless lady
²⁵⁵ Together remained in the gorgeous tent,
 The virtuous virgin and the vicious deceiver,
 Dreadful and direful; they dared not, however,
 Awaken the warrior, not one of the earls,
 Nor be first to find how had fared through the night
²⁶⁰ The most churlish of chieftains and the chastest of maidens,
 The pride of the Lord.

Now approached in their strength

The folk of the Hebrews. They fought remorselessly
 With hard-hammered weapons, with their hilts requited
 Their strife of long standing, with stained swords repaid

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²⁶⁵ Their ancient enmity; all of Assyria
 Was subdued and doomed that day by their work,
 Its pride bowed low. In panic and fright,
 In terror they stood around the tent of their chief,
 Moody in mind. Then the men all together
²⁷⁰ In concert clamored and cried aloud,
 Ungracious to God, and gritted their teeth,
 Grinding them in their grief. Then was their glory at an end,
 Their noble deeds and daring hopes. Then they deemed it wise
 To summon their lord from his sleep, but success was denied them.
²⁷⁵ A loyal liegeman, —long had he wavered—
 Desperately dared the door to enter,
 Ventured into the pavilion; violent need drove him.
 On the bed then he found, in frightful state lying,
 His gold-giver ghastly; gone was his spirit,
²⁸⁰ No life in him lingered. The liegeman straight fell.
 Trembling with terror, he tore at his hair,
 He clawed at his clothes; he clamored despairing,
 And to the waiting warriors these words he said,
 As they stood outside in sadness and fear:
²⁸⁵ “Here is made manifest our imminent doom,
 Is clearly betokened that the time is near,
 Pressing upon us with perils and woes,
 When we lose our lives, and lie defeated
 By the hostile host; here hewn by the sword,
²⁹⁰ Our lord is beheaded.” With heavy spirits

[129]

They threw their weapons away, and weary in heart,
 Scattered in flight.

[205](#). The picture of the birds of prey hovering over the battle field is one of the constant features of Anglo-Saxon battle poetry. Note its occurrence in [The Fight at Finnsburg](#) and [The Battle of Brunanburg](#) especially.

5. THE PURSUIT

Then their foemen pursued them,
 Their grim power growing, until the greatest part
 Of the cowardly band they conquered in battle
²⁹⁵ On the field of victory. Vanquished and sword-hewn,
 They lay at the will of the wolves, for the watchful and greedy
 Fowls to feed upon. Then fled the survivors
 From the shields of their foemen. Sharp on their trail came
 The crowd of the Hebrews, covered with victory,

³⁰⁰ With honors well-earned; aid then accorded them,
 Graciously granted them, God, Lord Almighty.
 They then daringly, with dripping swords,
 The corps of brave kinsmen, cut them a war-path
 Through the host of the hated ones; they hewed with their swords,
³⁰⁵ Sheared through the shield-wall. They shot fast and furiously,
 Men stirred to strife, the stalwart Hebrews,
 The thanes, at that time, thirsting exceedingly,
 Fain for the spear-fight. Then fell in the dust
 The chiefest part of the chosen warriors,
³¹⁰ Of the staunch and the steadfast Assyrian leaders,
 Of the fated race of the foe. Few of them came back
 Alive to their own land.

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The leaders returned

Over perilous paths through the piles of the slaughtered,
 Of reeking corpses; good occasion there was
³¹⁵ For the landmen to plunder their lifeless foes,
 Their ancient enemies in their armor laid low,
 Of battle spoils bloody, of beautiful trappings,
 Of bucklers and broad-swords, of brown war-helmets,
 Of glittering jewels. Gloriously had been
³²⁰ In the folk-field their foes overcome,
 By home-defenders, their hated oppressors
 Put to sleep by the sword. Senseless on the path
 Lay those who in life, the loathsomest were
 Of the tribes of the living.

6. THE SPOIL

³²⁵ Then the landmen all,
 Famous of family, for a full month's time,
 The proud curly-locked ones, carried and led
 To their glorious city, gleaming Bethulia,
 Helms and hip-knives, hoary burnies,
 Men's garments of war, with gold adorned,
³³⁰ With more of jewels than men of judgment,
 Keen in cunning might count or estimate;
 So much success the soldier-troop won,
 Bold under banners and in battle-strife
 Through the counsel of the clever Judith,
³³⁵ Maiden high-minded. As meed for her bravery,
 From the field of battle, the bold-hearted earls
 Brought in as her earnings the arms of Holofernes,
 His broad sword and bloody helmet, likewise his breast-armor large,
 Chased with choice red gold, all that the chief of the warriors,
³⁴⁰ The betrayer, possessed of treasure, of beautiful trinkets and heirlooms,
 Bracelets and brilliant gems. All these to the bright maid they gave
 As a gift to her, ready in judgment.

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7. THE PRAISE

For all this Judith now rendered
 Thanks to the Heavenly Host, from whom came all her success,
 Greatness and glory on earth and likewise grace in heaven,
³⁴⁵ Paradise as a victorious prize, because she had pure belief
 Always in the Almighty; at the end she had no doubt
 Of the prize she had prayed for long. For this be praise to God,
 Glory in ages to come, who shaped the clouds and the winds,
 Firmament and far-flung realms, also the fierce-raging streams
³⁵⁰ And the blisses of heaven, through his blessed mercy.

[132]

THE PHOENIX

[Text used: Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*. The Latin source is also printed there.]

Alliterative translations: Pancoast and Spaeth, *Early English Poems*; William Rice Sims, *Modern Language Notes*, vii, 11-13; Hall, *Judith, Phœnix*, etc.

Source: First part, Lactantius, *De Ave Phœnice*; second part, application of the myth to Christ based on Ambrose and Bede.

In summing up scholarly opinion up to the date of his own writing (1910) Mr. Kennedy says [*The Poems of Cynewulf*, pp. 58-59]: "In general, however, it may be said that, while the question does not submit itself to definite conclusions, the weight of critical opinion leans to the side of Cynewulf's having written the *Phœnix*, and that the time of its composition would fall

The first part of the poem is among the most pleasing pieces of description in Anglo-Saxon.]

I.

I have heard that there lies a land far hence
A noble realm well-known unto men,
In the eastern kingdoms. That corner of the world
Is not easy of access to every tribe
5 On the face of the earth, but afar it was placed
By the might of the Maker from men of sin.
The plain is beautiful, a place of blessings,
And filled with the fairest fragrance of earth;
Matchless is that island, its maker unequalled,
10 Steadfast and strong of heart, who established that land.
There are often open to the eyes of the blessed,
The happiness of the holy through heaven's door.
That is a winsome plain; the woods are green,
Far stretching under the stars. There no storm of rain or snow,
15 Nor breath of frost nor blast of fire,
Nor fall of hail nor hoary frost,
Nor burning sun nor bitter cold,
Nor warm weather nor winter showers
Shall work any woe, but that winsome plain
20 Is wholesome and unharmed; in that happy land
Blossoms are blown. No bold hills nor mountains
There stand up steep; no stony cliffs
Lift high their heads as here with us,
Nor dales nor glens nor darksome gorges,
25 Nor caves nor crags; nor occur there ever
Anything rough; but under radiant skies
Flourish the fields in flowers and blossoms.
This lovely land lieth higher
By twelve full fathoms, as famous writers,
30 As sages say and set forth in books,
Than any of the hills that here with us
Rise bright and high under heaven's stars.
Peaceful is that plain, pleasant its sunny grove,
Winsome its woodland glades; never wanes its increase
35 Nor fails of its fruitage, but fair stand the trees,
Ever green as God had given command;
In winter and summer the woodlands cease not
To be filled with fruit, and there fades not a leaf;
Not a blossom is blighted nor burned by the fire
40 Through all the ages till the end of time,
Till the world shall fail. When the fury of waters
Over all the earth in olden times
Covered the world, then the wondrous plain,
Unharmed and unhurt by the heaving flood,
45 Strongly withstood and stemmed the waves,
Blest and uninjured through the aid of God:
Thus blooming it abides till the burning fire
Of the day of doom when the death-chambers open
And the ghastly graves shall give up their dead.
50 No fearsome foe is found in that land,
No sign of distress, no strife, no weeping,
Neither age, nor misery, nor the menace of death,
Nor failing of life, nor foemen's approach,
No sin nor trial nor tribulation,
55 Nor the want of wealth, nor work for the pauper,
No sorrow nor sleep, nor sick-bed's pain,
Nor wintry winds, nor weather's raging,
Fierce under the heavens; nor the hard frost
Causeth discomfort with cold icicles.
60 Neither hail nor frost fall from the heavens,
Nor wintry cloud nor water descendeth
Stirred by the storms; but streams there flow,
Wondrously welling and watering the earth,
Pouring forth in pleasant fountains;
65 The winsome water from the wood's middle
Each month of the year from the mould of earth,
Cold as the sea, coursing through the woods,
Breaketh abundantly. It is the bidding of the Lord

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That twelve times yearly that teeming land
70 The floods shall o'erflow and fill with joy.
The groves are green with gorgeous bloom,
And fairest of fruits; there fail not at all
The holy treasures of the trees under heaven,
Nor falleth from the forests the fallow blossoms,
75 The beauty of the trees; but, bounteously laden,
The boughs are hanging heavy with fruit
That is always new in every season.
In the grassy plain all green appear,
Gorgeously garnished by God in his might,
80 The forests fair. Nor fails the wood
In its pleasing prospect; a perfume holy
Enchanteth the land. No change shall it know
Forever till he ends his ancient plan,
His work of wisdom as he willed it at first.

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II

85 In that wood there dwelleth a wondrous bird,
Fearless in flight, the Phoenix its name.
Lonely it liveth its life in this place,
Doughty of soul; death never seeks him
In that well-loved wood while the world shall endure.
90 He is said to watch the sun on his way
And to go to meet God's bright candle,
That gleaming gem, and gladly to note
When rises in radiance the most royal of stars
Up from the east over the ocean's waves,
95 The famous work of the Father, fair with adornments,
The bright sign of God. Buried are the stars,
Wandering 'neath the waters to the western realms;
They grow dim at dawn, and the dark night
Creepeth wanly away. Then on wings of strength,
100 Proud on his pinions, he placeth his gaze
Eagerly on the streams, and stares over the water
Where the gleam of heaven gliding shall come
O'er the broad ocean from the bright east.
So the wondrous bird at the water's spring
105 Bideth in beauty, in the brimming streams.
Twelve times there the triumphant bird
Bathes in the brook ere the beacon appears,
The candle of heaven, and the cold stream
Of the joy-inspiring springs he tasteth
110 From the icy burn at every bath.
Then after his sport in the springs at dawn,
Filled full of pride he flies to a tree
Where most easily he may in the eastern realm
Behold the journey, when the jewel of heaven
115 Over the shimmering sea, the shining light,
Gleameth in glory. Garnished is the land,
The world made beautiful, when the blessed gem
Illumines the land, the largest of stars
In the circle of the seas sends forth its rays.
120 Soon as the sun over the salt streams;
Rises in glory, then the gray-feathered bird
Blithely rises from the beam where he rested;
Fleet-winged he fareth and flieth on high;
Singing and caroling he soareth to heaven.
125 Fair is the famous fowl in his bearing
With joy in his breast, in bliss exulting;
He warbles his song more wondrously sweet
And choicer of note than ever child of man
Heard beneath the heavens since the High King,
130 The worker of wonders, the world established,
Heaven and earth. His hymn is more beautiful
And fairer by far than all forms of song-craft;
Its singing surpasseth the sweetest of music.
To the song can compare not the sound of trumpet,
135 Nor of horn; nor of harp, nor of heroes' voices
On all the earth, nor of organ's sound,
Nor singing song nor swan's fair feathers,
Nor of any good thing that God created
As a joy to men in this mournful world!

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140 Thus he singeth and carolleth crowned with joy,
 Until the bright sun in a southern sky
 Sinks to its setting; then silent he is
 And listeneth and boweth and bendeth his head,
 Sage in his thoughts, and thrice he shaketh
 145 His feathers for flight; the fowl is hushed.
 Twelve equal times he telleth the hours
 Of day and night. 'Tis ordained in this way,
 And willed that the dweller of the woods should have joy,
 Pleasure in that plain and its peaceful bliss,
 150 Taste delights and life and the land's enjoyments,
 Till he waiteth a thousand winters of life,
 The aged warden of the ancient wood.
 Then the gray-feathered fowl in the fullness of years
 Is grievously stricken. From the green earth he fleeth,
 155 The favorite of birds, from the flowering land,
 And beareth his flight to a far-off realm,
 To a distant domain where dwelleth no man,
 As his native land. Then the noble fowl
 Becometh ruler over the race of birds,
 160 Distinguished in their tribe, and for a time he dwelleth
 With them in the waste. Then on wings of strength,
 He flieth to the west, full of winters,
 Swift on his wing; in swarms then press,
 The birds about their lord; all long to serve him
 165 And to live in loyalty to their leader brave,
 Until he seeketh out the Syrian land
 With mighty train. Then turneth the pure one
 Sharply away, and in the shade of the forest
 He dwells, in the grove, in the desert place,
 170 Concealed and hid from the host of men.
 There high on a bough he abides alone,
 Under heaven's roof, hard by the roots
 Of a far stretching tree, which the Phœnix is called
 By the nations of earth from the name of that bird.
 175 The King of glory has granted that tree,
 The Holy One of heaven, as I have heard said,
 That it among all the other trees
 That grow in the glorious groves of the world
 Bloometh most brightly. No blight may hurt it,
 180 Nor work it harm, but while the world stands
 It shall be shielded from the shafts of evil.

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III

When the wind is at rest and the weather is fair,
 And the holy gem of heaven is shining,
 And clouds have flown and the forces of water
 185 Are standing stilled, and the storms are all
 Assuaged and soothed: from the south there gleameth
 The warm weather-candle, welcomed by men.
 In the boughs the bird then buildeth its home,
 Beginneth its nest; great is its need
 190 To work in haste, with the highest wisdom,
 That his old age he may give to gain new life,
 A fair young spirit. Then far and near,
 He gathers together to his goodly home
 The winsomest herbs and the wood's sweet blossoms,
 195 The fair perfumes and fragrant shoots
 Which were placed in the world by the wondrous Lord,
 By the Father of all, on the face of the earth,
 As a pleasure forever to the proud race of men—
 The beauty of blossoms. There he beareth away
 200 To that royal tree the richest of treasure.
 There the wild fowl in the waste land
 On the highest beams buildeth his house,
 On the loftiest limbs, and he liveth there
 In that upper room; on all sides he surrounds
 205 In that shade unbroken his body and wings
 With blessed fragrance and fairest of blooms,
 The most gorgeous of green things that grow on the earth.
 He awaiteth his journey when the gem of heaven
 In the summer season, the sun at its hottest,

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²¹⁰ Shineth over the shade and shapeth its destiny,
 Gazeth over the world. Then it groweth warm,
 His house becomes heated by the heavenly gleam;
 The herbs wax hot; the house steameth
 With the sweetest of savors; in the sweltering heat,
²¹⁵ In the furious flame, the fowl with his nest
 Is embraced by the bale-fire; then burning seizeth
 The disheartened one's house; in hot haste riseth
 The fallow flame, and the Phœnix it reacheth,
 In fullness of age. Then the fire eateth,
²²⁰ Burneth the body, while borne is the soul,
 The fated one's spirit, where flesh and bone
 Shall burn in the blaze. But it is born anew,
 Attaineth new life at the time allotted.
 When the ashes again begin to assemble,
²²⁵ To fall in a heap when the fire is spent,
 To cling in a mass, then clean becometh
 That bright abode— burnt by the fire
 The home of the bird. When the body is cold
 And its frame is shattered and the fire slumbers
²³⁰ In the funeral flame, then is found the likeness
 Of an apple that newly in the ashes appeareth,
 And waxeth into a worm wondrously fair,
 As if out from an egg it had opened its way,
 Shining from the shell. In the shade it groweth,
²³⁵ Till at first it is formed like a fledgling eagle,
 A fair young fowl; then further still
 It increaseth in stature, till in strength it is like
 To a full-grown eagle, and after that
 With feathers fair as at first it was,
²⁴⁰ Brightly blooming. Then the bird grows strong,
 Regains its brightness and is born again,
 Sundered from sin, somewhat as if
 One should fetch in food, the fruits of the earth,
 Should haul it home at harvest time,
²⁴⁵ The fairest of corn ere the frosts shall come
 At the time of reaping, lest the rain in showers
 Strike down and destroy it; a stay they have ready
 A feast of food, when frost and snow
 With their mighty coursing cover the earth
²⁵⁰ In winter weeds; the wealth of man
 From those fair fruits shall flourish again
 Through the nature of grain, which now in the ground
 Is sown as clear seed; then the sun's warm rays
 In time of spring sprouts the life germ,
²⁵⁵ Awakes the world's riches so that wondrous fruits,
 The treasures of earth, by their own kind
 Are brought forth again: that bird changeth likewise,
 Old in his years, to youth again,
 With fair new flesh; no food nor meat
²⁶⁰ He eateth on the earth save only a taste
 Of fine honey-dew which falleth often
 In the middle of night; the noble fowl
 Thus feedeth and groweth till he flieth again
 To his own domain, to his ancient dwelling.

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IV

²⁶⁵ When the bird springs reborn from its bower of herbs,
 Proud of pinion, pleased with new life,
 Young and full of grace, from the ground he then
 Skillfully piles up the scattered parts
 Of the graceful body, gathers the bones,
²⁷⁰ Which the funeral fire aforetime devoured;
 Then brings altogether the bones and the ashes,
 The remnant of the flames he arranges anew,
 And carefully covers that carrion spoil
 With fairest flowers. Then he fares away,
²⁷⁵ Seeking the sacred soil of his birthplace.
 With his feet he fastens to the fire's grim leavings,
 Clasps them in his claws and his country again,
 The sun-bright seat, he seeks in joy,
 His own native-land. All is renewed—

²⁸⁰ His body and feathers, in the form that was his,
 When placed in the pleasant plain by his Maker,
 By gracious God. Together he bringeth
 The bones of his body which were burned on the pyre,
 Which the funeral flames before had enveloped,
²⁸⁵ And also the ashes; then all in a heap
 This bird then burieth the bones and embers,
 His ashes on the island. Then his eyes for the first time
 Catch sight of the sun, see in the heaven
 That flaming gem, the joy of the firmament
²⁹⁰ Which beams from the east over the ocean billows.
 Before is that fowl fair in its plumage,
 Bright colors glow on its gorgeous breast,
 Behind its head is a hue of green,
 With brilliant crimson cunningly blended.
²⁹⁵ The feathers of its tail are fairly divided:
 Some brown, some flaming, some beautifully flecked
 With brilliant spots. At the back, his feathers
 Are gleaming white; green is his neck
 Both beneath and above, and the bill shines
³⁰⁰ As glass or a gem; the jaws glisten
 Within and without. The eye ball pierces,
 And strongly stares with a stone-like gaze,
 Like a clear-wrought gem that is carefully set
 Into a golden goblet by a goodly smith.
³⁰⁵ Surrounding its neck like the radiant sun,
 Is the brightest of rings braided with feathers;
 Its belly is wondrous with wealth of color,
 Sheer and shining. A shield extends
 Brilliantly fair above the back of the fowl.
³¹⁰ The comely legs are covered with scales;
 The feet are bright yellow. The fowl is in beauty
 Peerless, alone, though like the peacock
 Delightfully wrought, as the writings relate.
 It is neither slow in movement, nor sluggish in mien,
³¹⁵ Nor slothful nor inert as some birds are,
 Who flap their wings in weary flight,
 But he is fast and fleet, and floats through the air,
 Marvelous, winsome, and wondrously marked.
 Blessed is the God who gave him that bliss!
³²⁰ When at last it leaves the land, and journeys
 To hunt the fields of its former home,
 As the fowl flieth many folk view it.
 It pleases in passing the people of earth,
 Who are seen assembling from south and north;
³²⁵ They come from the east, they crowd from the west,
 Faring from afar; the folk throng to see
 The grace that is given by God in his mercy
 To this fairest fowl, which at first received
 From gracious God the greatest of natures
³³⁰ And a beauty unrivalled in the race of birds.
 Then over the earth all men marvel
 At the freshness and fairness and make it famous in writings;
 With their hands they mould it on the hardest of marble,
 Which through time and tide tells the multitudes
³³⁵ Of the rarity of the flying one. Then the race of fowls
 On every hand enter in hosts,
 Surge in the paths, praise it in song,
 Magnify the stern-hearted one in mighty strains;
 And so the holy one they hem in in circles
³⁴⁰ As it flies amain. The Phoenix is in the midst
 Pressed by their hosts. The people behold
 And watch with wonder how the willing bands
 Worship the wanderer, one after the other,
 Mightily proclaim and magnify their King,
³⁴⁵ Their beloved Lord. They lead joyfully
 The noble one home; but now the wild one
 Flies away fast; no followers may come
 From the happy host, when their head takes wing
 Far from this land to find his home.

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V

³⁵⁰ So the dauntless fowl after his fiery death

Happily hastens to his home again,
 To his beauteous abode. The birds return,
 Leaving their leader, with lonely hearts,
 Again to their land; then their gracious lord
 355 Is young in his courts. The King Almighty,
 God alone knows its nature by sex,
 Male or female; no man can tell,
 No living being save the Lord only
 How wise and wondrous are the ways of the bird,
 360 And the fair decree for the fowl's creation!
 There the happy one his home may enjoy,
 With its welling waters and woodland groves,
 May live in peace through the passing of winters
 A thousand in number; then he knows again
 365 The ends of his life; over him is laid
 The funeral fire: yet he finds life again,
 And wondrously awakened he waxes in strength.
 He droops not nor dreads his death therefore,
 The awful agony, since always he knows
 370 That the lap of the flame brings life afresh,
 Peace after death, when undaunted once more
 Fully feathered and formed as a bird
 Out of the ashes up he can spring,
 Safe under the heavens. To himself he is both
 375 A father and a son, and finds himself also
 Ever the heir to his olden life.
 The Almighty Maker of man has granted
 That though the fire shall fasten its fetters upon him,
 He is given new life, and lives again
 380 Fashioned with feathers as aforetime he was.

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VI

So each living man the life eternal
 Seeks for himself after sorest cares;
 That through the darksome door of death he may find
 The goodly grace of God and enjoy
 385 Forever and aye unending bliss
 As reward for his work—the wonders of heaven.
 The nature of this fowl is not unlike
 That of those chosen as children of God,
 And it shows men a sign of how sacred joys
 390 Granted by God they may gain in trial—
 Hold beneath the heavens through his holy grace,
 And abide in rapture in the realms above.
 We have found that the faithful Father created
 Man and woman through his wondrous might.
 395 At first in the fairest fields of his earth
 He set these sons on a soil unblemished,
 In a pleasant place, Paradise named,
 Since they lacked no delight as long as the pair
 Wisely heeded the Holy word
 400 In their new home. There hatred came,
 The old foe's envy, who offered them food,
 The fruit of the tree, which in folly they tried;
 Both ate of the apple against the order of God,
 Tasted the forbidden. Then bitter became
 405 Their woe after eating and for their heirs as well—
 For sons and daughters a sorrowful feast.
 Grievously were punished their greedy teeth
 For that greatest of guilt; God's wrath they knew
 And bitter remorse; hence bearing their crimes,
 410 Their sons must suffer for the sin of their parents
 Against God's commands. Hence, grieved in soul
 They shall lose the delights of the land of bliss
 Through envy of the serpent who deceived our elders
 In direful wise in days of yore
 415 Through his wicked heart, so that they went far hence
 To the dale of death to doleful life
 In a sorrowful home. Hidden from them
 Was the blessed life; and the blissful plain,
 By the fiend's cunning, was fastened close
 420 For many winters, till the Maker of wonders,
 The King of mankind, Comforter of the weary,

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Our only Hope, hither came down
To the godly band and again held it open.

VII

His advent is likened by learned writers
425 In their works of wisdom and words of truth,
To the flight of that fowl, when forth he goes
From his own country and becometh old,
Weighed with winters, weary in mind,
And finds in wandering the forest wood
430 Where a bower he builds: with branches and herbs,
With rarest of twigs, he raises his dwelling,
His nest in the wood. Great need he hath
That he gain again his gladsome youth
In the flame of fire that he may find new life,
435 Renew his youth, and his native home,
His sunbright seat, he may seek again
After his bath of fire. So abandoned before us
The first of our parents their fairest plain,
Their happy home, their hope of glory,
440 To fare afar on a fearful journey,
Where hostile hands harshly beset them;
Evil ones often injured them sorely.
Yet many men marked well the Lord,
Heeded his behests in holy customs,
445 In glorious deeds, so that God, their Redeemer,
The high Heaven-King hearkened to them.
That is the high tree wherein holy men
Hide their home from the harm of their foe
And know no peril, neither with poison
450 Nor with treacherous token in time of evil.
There God's warrior works him a nest,
With doughty deeds dangers avoids,
He distributes alms to the stricken and needy,
He tells graceless men of the mercy of God,
455 Of the Father's help; he hastens forth,
Lessening the perils of this passing life,
Its darksome deeds, and does God's will
With bravery in his breast. His bidding he seeks
In prayer, with pure heart and pliant knee
460 Bent to the earth; all evil is banished,
All grim offences by his fear of God;
Happy in heart he hopes full well
To do good deeds: the Redeemer is his shield
In his varied walks, the Wielder of victory,
465 Joy-giver to people. Those plants are the ones,
The flowers of fruit, which the fowl of wildness
Finds in this world from far and wide
And brings to his abode, where it builds a nest
With firmness of heart against fear and hatred.
470 So in that place God's soldiers perform
With courage and might the Creator's commands.
Then they gain them glory: they are given rewards
By the gracious God for their goodness of heart.
From those is made a pleasant dwelling
475 As reward for their works, in the wondrous city;
Since they held in their hearts the holy teachings,
Serving their Lord with loving souls
By day and by night —and never ceasing—
With fervent faith preferring their Lord
480 Above worldly wealth. They ween not, indeed,
That long they will live in this life that is fleeting.
A blessed earl earns by his virtue
A home in heaven with the highest King,
And comfort forever,— this he earns ere the close
485 Of his days in the world, when Death, the warrior,
Greedy for warfare, girded with weapons,
Seeketh each life and sendeth quickly
Into the bosom of the earth those deserted bodies
Lorn of their souls, where long they shall bide
490 Covered with clay till the coming of the fire.
Many of the sons of men into the assembly
Are led by the leaders; the Lord of angels,

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The Father Almighty, the Master of hosts,
 Will judge with justice the joyful and the sad.
 495 Then mortal men in a mass shall arise
 As the righteous King, the Ruler of angels,
 The Savior of souls said it must be,
 Gave command by the trumpet to the tribes of the world.
 Then ends darkest death for those dear to the Lord;
 500 Through the grace of God the good shall depart
 In clamoring crowds when this cruel world
 Shall burst into flames, into baleful fire;
 The earth shall end. Then all shall have
 Most frightful fear, when the fire crashes over
 505 Earth's fleeting fortunes, when the flame eats up
 Its olden treasures, eagerly graspeth
 On goodly gold and greedily consumes
 The land's adornments. Then dawns in light
 In that awesome hour for all of men,
 510 The fair and sacred symbol of the fowl,
 When the mighty Ruler shall arouse all men,
 Shall gather together from the grave the bones,
 The limbs of the body, those left from the flame,
 Before the knee of Christ: the King in splendor
 515 From his lofty seat shall give light to the holy,
 The gem of glory. It will be joyous and gladsome
 To the servers of Truth in that sad time.

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VIII

There the bodies, bathed of their sins,
 Shall go in gladness; again shall their spirits
 520 To their bony frames, and the fire shall burn,
 Mounting high to heaven. Hot shall be to many
 That awful flame, when every man,
 Unblemished or sinful, his soul in his body,
 From the depths of his grave seeks the doom of God,
 525 Frightfully afraid. The fire shall save men,
 Burning all sin. So shall the blessed
 After weary wandering, with their works be clothed,
 With the fruit of their deeds: fair are these roots,
 These winsome flowers that the wild fowl
 530 Collects to lay on his lovely nest
 In order that easily his own fair home
 May burn in the sun, and himself along with it,
 And so after the fire he finds him new life;
 So every man in all the world
 535 Shall be covered with flesh, fair and comely,
 And always young, if his own choice leads him
 To work God's will; then the world's high King
 Mighty at the meeting mercy will grant him.
 Then the hymns shall rise high from the holy band,
 540 The chosen souls shall chant their songs,
 In praise of the powerful Prince of men,
 Strain upon strain, and strengthened and fragrant
 Of their godly works they shall wend to glory.
 Then are men's spirits made spotless and bright
 545 Through the flame of the fire— refined and made pure.
 In all the earth let not anyone ween
 That I wrought this lay with lying speech,
 With hated word-craft! Hear ye the wisdom
 Of the hymns of Job! With heart of joy
 550 And spirit brave, he boldly spoke;
 With wondrous sanctity that word he said:
 "I feel it a fact in the fastness of my soul
 That one day in my nest death I shall know,
 And weary of heart woefully go hence,
 555 Compassed with clay, on my closing journey,
 Mournful of mind, in the moldy earth.
 And through the gift of God I shall gain once more
 Like the Phoenix fowl, a fair new life,
 On the day of arising from ruinous death,
 560 Delights with God, where the loving throng
 Are exalting their Lord. I look not at all
 Ever to come to the end of that life

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Of light and bliss, though my body shall lie
 In its gruesome grave and grow decayed,
 565 A joy to worms; for the Judge of the world
 Shall save my soul, and send it to glory
 After the time of death. I shall trust forever
 With steadfast breast, in the Strength of angels;
 Firm is my faith in the Father of all.”
 570 Thus sang the sage his song of old,
 Herald to God, with gladsome heart:
 How he was lifted to life eternal.
 Then we may truly interpret the token clearly
 Which the glorious bird gave through its burning.
 575 It gathers together the grim bone-remnants,
 The ashes and embers all into one place
 After the surge of the fire; the fowl then seizes it
 With its feet and flies to the Father’s garden
 Towards the sun; for a time there he sojourns,
 580 For many winters, made in new wise,
 All of him young; nor may any there yearn
 To do him menace with deeds of malice.
 So may after death by the Redeemer’s might
 Souls go with bodies, bound together,
 585 Fashioned in loveliness, most like to that fowl,
 In rich array, with rare perfumes,
 Where the steadfast sun streams its light
 O’er the sacred hosts in the happy city.

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IX

Then high over the roofs the holy Ruler
 590 Shines on the souls of the saved and the loyal.
 Radiant fowls follow around him
 Brightest of birds, in bliss exulting,
 The chosen and joyous ones join him at home,
 Forever and ever, where no evil is wrought
 595 By the foulest fiend in his fickle deceit;
 But they shall live in lasting light and beauty,
 As the Phoenix fowl, in the faith of God.
 Every one of men’s works in that wondrous home,
 In that blissful abode, brightly shines forth
 600 In the peaceful presence of the Prince eternal,
 Who resembles the sun. A sacred crown
 Most richly wrought with radiant gems,
 High over the head of each holy soul
 Glitters refulgent; their foreheads gleam,
 605 Covered with glory; the crown of God
 Embellishes beautifully the blessed host
 With light in that life, where lasting joy
 Is fresh and young and fades not away,
 But they dwell in bliss, adorned in beauty,
 610 With fairest ornaments, with the Father’s angels.
 They see no sorrow in those sacred courts,
 No sin nor suffering nor sad work-days,
 No burning hunger, nor bitter thirst,
 No evil nor age: but ever their King
 615 Granteth his grace to the glorious band
 That loves its Lord and everlasting King,
 That glorifies and praises the power of God.
 That host round the holy high-set throne
 Makes then melody in mighty strains;
 620 The blessed saints blithely sing
 In unison with angels, orisons to the Lord:
 “Peace to thee, O God, thou proud Monarch,
 Thou Ruler reigning with righteousness and skill;
 Thanks for thy goodly gifts to us all;
 625 Mighty and measureless is thy majesty and strength,
 High and holy! The heavens, O Lord,
 Are fairly filled, O Father Almighty,
 Glory of glories, in greatness ruling
 Among angels above and on earth beneath!
 630 Guard us, O God of creation; thou governest all things!
 Lord of the highest heavens above!”
 So shall the saints sing his praises,
 Those free from sin, in that fairest of cities,

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Proclaim his power, the righteous people,
 635 The host in heaven hail the Redeemer:
 Honor without end is only for him,
 Not ever at all had he any birth,
 Any beginning of bliss, though he was born in the world,
 On this earth in the image of an innocent child;
 640 With unfailling justice and fairest judgments,
 High above the heavens in holiness he dwelt!
 Though he must endure the death of the cross,
 Bear the bitter burden of men,
 When three days have passed after the death of his body,
 645 He regains new life through the love of God,
 Through the aid of the Father. So the Phœnix betokens
 In his youthful state, the strength of Christ,
 Who in a wondrous wise awakes from the ashes
 Unto the life of life, with limbs begirded;
 650 So the Savior sought to aid us
 Through the loss of his body, life without end.
 Likewise that fowl filleth his wings,
 Loads them with sweet and scented roots,
 With winsome flowers and flies away;
 655 These are the words, wise men tell us,
 The songs of the holy ones whose souls go to heaven,
 With the loving Lord to live for aye,
 In bliss of bliss, where they bring to God
 Their words and their works, wondrous in savor,
 660 As a precious gift, in that glorious place,
 In that life of light.

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 Lasting be the praise
 Through the world of worlds and wondrous honor,
 And royal power in the princely realm,
 The kingdom of heaven. He is King indeed
 665 Of the lands below and of lordly majesty,
 Encircled with honor in that city of beauty.
 He has given us leave *lucis auctor*,
 That here we may *merueri*
 As reward for good *gaudia in celo*,
 670 That all of us may *maxima regna*
 Seek and sit on *sedibus altis*,
 Shall live a life *lucis et pacis*,
 Shall own a home *almae letitiae*,
 Know blessings and bliss; *blandem and mitem*
 675 Lord they shall see *sine fine*,
 And lift up a song *lauda perenne*
 Forever with the angels. *Alleluia!*

680. This and the following lines are imitated from the original in which the first half line, in Old English, alliterates with the second half line, in Latin. The Latin is here retained. The meaning of the lines is this: "The Author of light has given us leave that we may here merit as a reward for good, joy in heaven, that all of us may seek the mighty kingdom and sit on the high seats, may live a life of light and peace, may own a home of tender joy; may see the merciful and mild Lord for time without end, and may lift up a song in eternal praise, forever with the angels. Alleluia!"

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THE GRAVE

[Text used: Kluge, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*, reprinted from Arnold Schroeer, *Anglia*, v, 289.

Translation: Longfellow. Discussion of this translation in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprache*, xxix, 205.

It is probably the latest in date of any of the Anglo-Saxon poems.]

Before thou wast born, there was built thee a house;
 For thee was a mould meant ere thy mother bore thee;
 They have not made it ready nor reckoned its depth;
 No one has yet learned how long it shall be.
 5 I point out thy path to the place thou shalt be;
 Now I shall measure thee, and the mould afterwards.
 Thy house is not highly timbered.
 It is unhigh and low; when thou lyeest therein,
 The bottom and side boards shall bind thee near:
 10 Close above thy breast is builded the roof.
 Thou shalt dwell full cold in the clammy earth.
 Full dim and dismal that den is to live in.
 Doorless is that house, and is dark within;
 Down art thou held there and death hath the key.
 15 Loathly is that house of earth and horrid to live in.

There thou shalt tarry and be torn by worms.
Thus thou art laid, and leavest thy friends;
Thou hast never a comrade who will come to thee,
Who will hasten to look how thou likest thy house.
20 Or ever will undo thy door for thee.
. and after thee descend;
For soon thou art loathsome and unlovely to see:
From the crown of thy head shall the hair be lost;
Thy locks shall fall and lose their freshness;
25 No longer is it fair for the fingers to stroke.

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III. POEMS FROM THE CHRONICLE

THE BATTLE OF BRUNNANBURG

[Critical edition: Sedgefield, *The Battle of Maldon and Six Short Poems from the Saxon Chronicle*, Boston, 1904, Belles Lettres Edition.

Translation: Tennyson; Pancoast and Spaeth, *Early English Poems*, p. 81.

Date: It appears in the Chronicle under the year 937.

Danes living north of the Humber conspired with their kinsmen in Ireland under the two Olafs, together with the Scottish king Constantine and the Strathclyde Britons under their king Eugenius, against Æthelstan, king of Wessex. The allies met in the south of Northumbria. Æthelstan encountered them at Brunnanburg and defeated them.

The site of Brunnanburg has not been identified. The best claim is probably for Bramber, near Preston, in the neighborhood of which, in 1840, was found a great hoard of silver ingots and coins, none later than 950. This was possibly the war chest of the confederacy. *Dyngesmere* has not been identified.

More than half the half-lines are exact copies from other Anglo-Saxon poems.]

Here Æthelstan the king, of earls the lord,
Bracelet-giver of barons and his brother as well,
Edmund the Ætheling, honor eternal
Won at warfare by the wielding of swords
5 Near Brunnanburg; they broke the linden-wall,
Struck down the shields with the sharp work of hammers,
The heirs of Edward, as of old had been taught
By their kinsmen who clashed in conflict often
Defending their firesides against foemen invaders,
10 Their hoards and their homes. The hated ones perished,
Soldiers of Scotland and seamen-warriors—
Fated they fell. The field was wet
With the blood of the brave, after the bright sun
Had mounted at morning, the master of planets
15 Glided over the ground, God's candle clear,
The Lord's everlasting, till the lamp of heaven
Sank to its setting. Soldiers full many
Lay mangled by spears, men of the Northland,
Shamefully shot o'er their shields, and Scotchmen,
20 Weary and war-sated. The West-Saxons forth
All during the day with their daring men
Followed the tracks of their foemen's troops.
From behind they hewed and harried the fleeing,
With sharp-ground swords. Never shunned the Mercians
25 The hard hand-play of hero or warrior
Who over the oar-path with Anlaf did come,
Who sailed on a ship and sought the land,
Fated in fight.

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Five chieftains lay
Killed in the conflict, kings full youthful,
30 Put to sleep by the sword, and seven also
Of the earls of [Anlaf](#), and others unnumbered,
Of sailors and Scotchmen. Sent forth in flight then
Was the prince of the Northmen, pressed hard by need,
To the stem of his ship; with a staunch little band
35 To the high sea he hurried; in haste the king sailed
Over the fallow flood, fled for his life.
Also the sage one sorrowfully northward
Crept to his kinsmen, Constantinus,
The hoary war-hero; for him was small need
40 To boast of the battle-play; the best of his kinsmen
And friends had fallen on the field of battle,
Slain at the strife, and his son left behind

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On the field of fight, felled and wounded,
 Young at the battle. No boast dared he make
 45 Of strife and of sword-play, the silver-haired leader,
 Full of age and of evil, nor had Anlaf the more.
 With their vanquished survivors no vaunt could they make
 That in works of war their worth was unequalled,
 In the fearful field, in the flashing of standards,
 50 In the meeting of men, and the mingling of spears,
 And the war-play of weapons, when they had waged their battle
 Against the [heirs of Edward](#) on the awful plain.
 Now departed the Northmen in their nailed ships,
 Dreary from dart-play on Dyngesmere.
 55 Over the deep water to Dublin they sailed,
 Broken and baffled back to Ireland.
 So, too, the brothers both went together,
 The King and the [Ætheling](#); to their kinsmen's home,
 To the wide land of Wessex —warrior's exultant.
 60 To feast on the fallen on the field they left
 The sallow-hued spoiler, the swarthy raven,
 Horned of beak, and the hoary-backed
 White-tailed eagle to eat of the carrion,
 65 And the greedy goshawk, and that gray beast,
 The wolf in the wood. Not worse was the slaughter
 Ever on this island at any time,
 Or more folk felled before this strife
 With the edge of the sword, as is said in old books,
 In ancient authors, since from the east hither
 70 The Angles and Saxons eagerly sailed
 Over the salt sea in search of Britain,—
 Since the crafty warriors conquered the Welshmen
 And, greedy for glory, gained them the land.

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[31](#). *Anlaf*: the Old English form of "Olaf."

[52](#). *Heirs of Edward*: the English, descendants of Edward the Elder.

[58](#). *The Ætheling*: Edmund the Ætheling (or prince) of [line 3](#).

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THE BATTLE OF MALDON

[Critical edition: Sedgefield, *The Battle of Maldon and Six Short Poems from the Saxon Chronicle*, Boston, 1904, Belles Lettres Edition.

Date: It appears in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 991.

"*The Battle of Maldon* treats not of legendary heroes of the Germanic races but of an actual historic personage, an English hero and patriot fallen in battle against a foreign invader a very short time before the poem was made. A single event in contemporary history is here described with hardly suppressed emotion by one who knew his hero and loved him. There is none of the allusiveness and excursiveness of the *Beowulf*; we have here not a member of an epic cycle, but an independent song. Very striking is the absence of ornament from the *Battle of Maldon*; all is plain, blunt, and stern."—Sedgefield, *The Battle of Maldon*, pp. vi-vii.]

. was broken;
 He bade the young barons abandon their horses,
 To drive them afar and dash quickly forth,
 In their hands and brave heart to put all hope of success.
 5 The [kinsman of Offa](#) discovered then first
 That the earl would not brook dishonorable bearing.
 He held in his hand [the hawk](#) that he loved,
[Let him fly](#) to the fields; to the fight then he stepped;
 By this one could know that the knight was unwilling
 10 To weaken in war, when his weapons he seized.
 Edric wished also to aid his chief,
 His folk-lord in fight; forward he bore
 His brand to the battle; a brave heart he had
 So long as he held locked in his hand
 15 His board and his broad sword; his boast he made good,
 Fearless to fight before his lord.
 Then Byrhtnoth began to embolden the warriors;
 He rode and counseled them, his comrades he taught
 How they should stand in the stronghold's defence,
 20 Bade them to bear their bucklers correctly,
 Fast by their hands without fear in their hearts.
 When the folk by fair words he had fired with zeal,
 He alighted in a crowd of his loyal comrades,

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Where he felt that his friends were most faithful and true.
 25 Then he stood on the strand; sternly the messenger
 Of the Vikings called in vaunting words,
 Brought him the boast of the bloody seamen,
 The errand to the earl, at the edge of the water:
 "I am sent to thee by seamen bold;
 30 They bade me summon thee to send them quickly
 Rings for a ransom, and rather than fight
 It is better for you to bargain with gold
 Than that we should fiercely fight you in battle.
 It is futile to fight if you fill our demands;
 35 If you give us gold we will grant you a truce.
 If commands thou wilt make, who art mightiest of warriors,
 That thy folk shall be free from the foemen's attack,
 Shall give of their wealth at the will of the seamen,
 A treasure for tribute, with a truce in return,
 40 We will go with the gold again to our ships,
 We will sail to the sea and vouchsafe to you peace."
 Byrhtnoth burst forth, his buckler he grasped,
 His spear he seized, and spoke in words
 Full of anger and ire, and answer he gave:
 45 "Dost thou hear, oh seamen, what our heroes say?
 Spears they will send to the sailors as tribute,
 Poisoned points and powerful swords,
 And such weapons of war as shall win you no battles.
 Envoy of Vikings, your vauntings return,
 50 Fare to thy folk with a far sterner message,
 That here staunchly stands with his steadfast troops,
 The lord that will fight for the land of his fathers,
 For the realm of Æthelred, my royal chief,
 For his folk and his fold; fallen shall lie
 55 The heathen at shield-play; Shameful I deem it
 With our treasure as tribute that you take to your ships,
 Without facing a fight, since thus far hither
 You have come and encroached on our king's domain.
 You shall not so easily earn our treasure;
 60 You must prove your power with point and sword edge,
 With grim war grip ere we grant you tribute."
 He bade then his band to bear forth their shields,
 Until they arrived at the river bank.
 The waters prevented the warriors' encounter;
 65 [The tide flowed in](#), the flood after the ebb,
 Locked up the land; too long it seemed
 Until they could meet and mingle their spears.
 By [Panta's stream](#) they stood in array,
 The East Saxon army and the eager shield-warriors;
 70 [Each troop was helpless](#) to work harm on the other,
 Save the few who were felled by a flight of arrows.
 The flood receded; the sailors stood ready,
 All of the Vikings eager for victory.
 Byrhtnoth bade the bridge to be defended,
 75 The brave-hearted warrior, by Wulfstan the bold
 With his crowd of kinsmen; he was Ceola's son,
 And he felled the first of the foemen who stepped
 On the bridge, the boldest of the band of men.
 There waited with Wulfstan the warriors undaunted,
 80 Ælfhere and Maccus, men of courage;
 At the ford not a foot would they flee the encounter,
 But close in conflict they clashed with the foe,
 As long as they wielded their weapons with strength.
 As soon as they saw and perceived it clearly,
 85 How fiercely fought was the defense of the bridge,
 The treacherous tribe in trickery asked
 That they be allowed to lead their hosts
 For a closer conflict, to cross over the ford.
 Then the earl, too eager to enter the fight,
 90 Allowed too much land to the loathed pirates.
 Clearly then called over the cold water
 Byrthelm's son; the soldiers listened:
 "Room is now made for you; rush quickly here
 Forward to the fray; fate will decide
 95 Into whose power shall pass this place of battle."
 Went then the battle-volves— of water they recked not—
 The pirate warriors west over Panta;
 Over the bright waves they bore their shields;

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The seamen stepped to the strand with their lindens.
 100 In ready array against the raging hosts
 Stood Byrhtnoth's band; he bade them with shields
 To form a phalanx, and to defend themselves stoutly,
 Fast holding the foe. The fight was near,
 The triumph at conflict; the time had come
 105 When fated men should fall in battle.
 Then arose an alarm; the ravens soared,
 The eagle eager for prey; on earth was commotion.
 Then sped from their hands the hardened spears,
 Flew in fury file-sharpened darts;
 110 Bows were busy, boards met javelins,
 Cruel was the conflict; in companies they fell;
 On every hand lay heaps of youths.
 Wulfmere was woefully wounded to death,
 Slaughtered the sister's son of Byrhtnoth;
 115 With swords he was strongly stricken to earth.
 To the vikings quickly requital was given;
 I learned that Edward alone attacked
 Stoutly with his sword, not stinting his blows,
 So that fell at his feet many fated invaders;
 120 For his prowess the prince gave praise and thanks
 To his chamberlain brave, when chance would permit.
 So firm of purpose they fought in their turn,
 Young men in battle; they yearned especially
 To lead their line with the least delay
 125 To fight their foes in fatal conflict,
 Warriors with weapons. The world seethed with slaughter.
 Steadfast they stood, stirred up by Byrhtnoth;
 He bade his thanes to think on battle,
 And fight for fame with the foemen Danes.
 130 The fierce warrior went, his weapon he raised,
 His shield for a shelter; to the soldier he came;
 The chief to the churl a challenge addressed;
 Each to the other had evil intent.
 The seamen then sent from the south a spear,
 135 So that wounded lay the lord of the warriors;
 He shoved with his shield till the shaft was broken,
 And burst the spear till back it sprang.
 Enraged was the daring one; he rushed with his dart
 On the wicked warrior who had wounded him sore.
 140 Sage was [the soldier](#); he sent his javelin
 Through the grim youth's neck; he guided his hand
 And furiously felled his foeman dead.
 Straightway another he strongly attacked,
 And burst his burnie; in his breast he wounded him.
 145 Through his hard coat-of-mail; in his heart there stood
 The poisoned point. Pleased was the earl,
 Loudly he laughed, to the Lord he gave thanks
 For the deeds of the day the Redeemer had granted.
 A hostile youth hurled from his hand a dart;
 150 The spear in flight then sped too far,
 And [the honorable earl](#) of Æthelred fell.
 By his side there stood a stripling youth,
 A boy in battle who boldly drew
 The bloody brand from the breast of his chief.
 155 The young Wulfmere, Wulfstan's son,
 Gave back again the gory war-lance;
 The point pierced home, so that prostrate lay
 The Viking whose valor had vanquished the earl.
 To the earl then went an armed warrior;
 160 He sought to snatch and seize his rings,
 His booty and bracelets, his bright shining sword.
 Byrhtnoth snatched forth the brown-edged weapon
 From his sheath, and sharply shook the attacker;
 Certain of the seamen too soon joined against him,
 165 As he checked the arm of the charging enemy;
 Now sank to the ground his golden brand;
 He might not hold the hilt of his mace,
 Nor wield his weapons. These words still he spoke,
 To embolden the youths; the battle-scarred hero
 170 Called on his comrades to conquer their foes;
 He no longer had strength to stand on his feet,
 he looked to heaven:
 "Ruler of realms, I render thee thanks

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For all of the honors that on earth I have had;
 175 Now, gracious God, have I greatest of need
 That thou save my soul through thy sovereign mercy,
 That my spirit speed to its splendid home
 And pass into thy power, O Prince of angels,
 And depart in peace; this prayer I make,
 180 That the hated hell-fiends may harass me not."
 Then the heathen dogs hewed down the noble one,
 And both the barons that by him stood—
 Ælfnoth and Wulfmær each lay slaughtered;
 They lost their lives in their lord's defence.
 185 Then fled from the fray those who feared to remain.
 First in the frantic flight was Godric,
 The son of Odda; he forsook his chief
 Who had granted him gifts of goodly horses;
 Lightly he leapt on his lord's own steed,
 190 In its royal array —no right had he to it;
 His brothers also the battle forsook.
 Godwin and Godwy made good their escape,
 And went to the wood, for the war they disliked;
 They fled to the fastnesses in fear of their lives,
 195 And many more of the men than was fitting,
 Had they freshly in mind remembered the favors,
 The good deeds he had done them in days of old.
 Wise were the words spoken once by Offa
 As he sat with his comrades assembled in council:
 200 "There are many who boast in the mead-hall of bravery
 Who turn in terror when trouble comes."
 The chief of the folk now fell to his death,
 Æthelred's earl; all his companions
 Looked on their lord as he lay on the field.
 205 Now there approached some proud retainers;
 The hardy heroes hastened madly,
 All of them eager either to die
 Or valiantly avenge their vanquished lord.
 They were eagerly urged by Ælfric's son,
 210 A warrior young in winters; these words he spoke—
 Ælfwine then spoke, an honorable speech:
 "Remember how we made in the mead-hall our vaunts,
 From the benches our boasts of bravery we raised,
 Heroes in the hall, of hard-fought battles;
 215 The time has now come for the test of your courage.
 Now I make known my noble descent;
 I come from Mercia, of mighty kinsmen;
 My noble grandsire's name was Ealdhelm,
 Wise in the ways of the world this elder.
 220 Among my proud people no reproach shall be made
 That in fear I fled afar from the battle,
 To leave for home with my leader hewn down,
 Broken in battle; that brings me most grief;
 He was not only my earl but also my kinsman."
 225 Then harboring hatred he hastened forth,
 And with the point of spear he pierced and slew
 A seaman grim who sank to the ground
 Under weight of the weapon. To war he incited
 His friends and fellows, in the fray to join.
 230 Offa shouted; his ash-spear shook:
 "Thou exhortest, O Ælfwine, in the hour of need,
 When our lord is lying full low before us,
 The earl on the earth; we all have a duty
 That each one of us should urge on the rest
 235 Of the warriors to war, while his weapons in hand
 He may have and hold, his hard-wrought mace,
 His dart and good sword. The deed of Godric,
 The wicked son of Offa, has weakened us all;
 Many of the men thought when he mounted the steed,
 240 Rode on the proud palfry, that our prince led us forth;
 Therefore on the field the folk were divided,
 The shield-wall was shattered. May shame curse the man
 Who deceived our folk and sent them in flight."
 Leofsunu spoke and his linden-shield raised,
 245 His board to defend him and embolden his fellows:
 "I promise you now from this place I will never
 Flee a foot-space, but forward will rush,
 Where I vow to revenge my vanquished lord.

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The stalwart warriors round Sturmere shall never
 250 Taunt me and twit me for traitorous conduct,
 That lordless I fled when my leader had fallen,
 Ran from the war; rather may weapons,
 The iron points slay me." Full ireful he went;
 Fiercely he fought; flight he disdained.
 255 Dunhere burst forth; his dart he brandished,
 Over them all; the aged churl cried,
 Called the brave ones to battle in Bryhtnoth's avenging:
 "Let no hero now hesitate who hopes to avenge
 His lord on the foemen, nor fear for his life."
 260 Then forward they fared and feared not for their lives;
 The clansman with courage the conflict began;
 Grasped their spears grimly, to God made their prayer
 That they might dearly repay the death of their lord,
 And deal defeat to their dastardly foes.
 265 A hostage took hold now and helped them with courage;
 He came from Northumbria of a noble kindred,
 The son of Ecglaf, Æscferth his name;
 He paused not a whit at the play of weapons,
 But unerringly aimed his arrows uncounted;
 270 Now he shot on the shield, now he shattered a Viking;
 With the point of his [arrow](#) he pierced to the [marrow](#)
 While he wielded his weapons of war unsubdued.
 Still in the front stood the stalwart Edward,
 Burning for battle; his boasts he spoke:
 275 He never would flee a foot-pace of land,
 Or leave his lord where he lay on the field;
 He shattered the shield-wall; with the shipmen he fought,
 Till on the treacherous tribesmen his treasure-giver's death
 He valiantly avenged ere his violent end.
 280 Such daring deeds did the doughty Æthric,
 Brother of Sibrht and bravest of soldiers;
 He eagerly fought and the others followed;
 They cleft the curved shields; keenly they battled;
 Then burst the buckler's rim, and the burnies sang
 285 A song of slaughter. Then was slain in battle,
 The seaman by Offa; and the earth received him;
 Soon [Offa](#) himself was slain in battle;
 He had laid down his life for his lord as he promised
 290 In return for his treasure, when he took his vow
 That they both alive from battle should come,
 Hale to their homes or lie hewn down in battle,
 Fallen on the field with their fatal wounds;
 He lay by his lord like a loyal thane.
 295 Then shivered the shields; the shipmen advanced,
 Raving with rage; they ran their spears
 Through their fated foes. Forth went Wistan,
 Thurstan's son then, to the thick of the conflict.
 In the throng he slew three of the sailors,
 300 Ere the son of Wigeline sent him to death.
 The fight was stiff; and fast they stood;
 In the cruel conflict they were killed by scores,
 Weary with wounds; woeful was the slaughter.
 Oswald and Eadwold all of the while,
 305 Both the brothers, emboldened the warriors,
 Encouraged their comrades with keen spoken words,
 Besought them to strive in their sore distress,
 To wield their weapons and not weaken in battle.
 Byrhtwold then spoke; his buckler he lifted,
 310 The old companion, his ash-spear shook
 And boldly encouraged his comrades to battle:
 "Your courage be the harder, your hearts be the keener,
 And sterner the strife as your strength grows less.
 Here lies our leader low on the earth,
 315 Struck down in the dust; doleful forever
 Be the traitor who tries to turn from the war-play.
 I am old of years, but yet I flee not;
 Staunch and steadfast I stand by my lord,
 And I long to be by my loved chief."
 320 So the son of Æthelgar said to them all.
 Godric emboldened them; oft he brandished his lance,
 Violently threw at the Vikings his war-spear,
 So that first among the folk he fought to the end;
 Hewed down and hacked, till the hated ones killed him—

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5. *Offa's kinsman* is not named. Offa himself is mentioned in line 286.

8. Is the fact that the earl is amusing himself with a falcon just before the battle to be taken as a sign of contempt for the enemy?

65. "The *Panta*, or Blackwater as it is now called, opens at Maldon into a large estuary, where a strong tide runs."—Sedgefield.

70. The approaches to the bridge were covered with water at high tide; hence the Norsemen feared to cross at high tide and asked for a truce.

140. The soldier is Byrhtnoth.

151. This refers to Byrhtnoth.

271. The two halves of the line rime in the original.

287. *Offa*: "the kinsman of Gad" in the original. The reference is to Offa and we have avoided confusion by translating the phrase by the name of the man meant.

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APPENDIX—SELECTIONS FROM OLD ENGLISH PROSE

ACCOUNT OF THE POET CÆDMON

[From the Anglo-Saxon version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Text used: Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, pp. 8 ff.]

In the monastery of this abbess [Hild] was a certain brother especially distinguished and gifted with the grace of God, because he was in the habit of making poems filled with piety and virtue. Whatever he learned⁵ of holy writ through interpreters he gave forth in a very short time in poetical language with the greatest of sweetness and inspiration, well wrought in the English tongue. Because of his songs the minds of many men were turned from the thoughts of this world and¹⁰ incited toward a contemplation of the heavenly life. There were, to be sure, others after him among the Angles who tried to compose sacred poetry, but none of them could equal him; because his instruction in poetry was not at all from men, nor through the aid of¹⁵ any man, but it was through divine inspiration and as a gift from God that he received the power of song. For that reason he was never able to compose poetry of a light or idle nature, but only the one kind that pertained to religion and was fitted to the tongue of a²⁰ godly singer such as he.

This man had lived the life of a layman until he was somewhat advanced in years, and had never learned any songs. For this reason often at the banquets where for the sake of merriment it was ruled that they should²⁵ all sing in turn at the harp, when he would see the harp approach him, he would arise from the company out of shame and go home to his house. On one occasion he had done this and had left the banquet hall and gone out to the stable to the cattle which it was his duty to guard³⁰ that night. Then in due time he lay down and slept, and there stood before him in his dream a man who hailed him and greeted him and called him by name: "Cædmon, sing me something." Then he answered and said: "I can not sing anything; and for that reason I left³⁵ the banquet and came here, since I could not sing." Once more the man who was speaking with him said: "No matter, you must sing for me." Then he answered: "What shall I sing?" Thereupon the stranger said: "Sing to me of the beginning of things." When he had⁴⁰ received this answer he began forthwith to sing, in praise of God the Creator, verses and words that he had never heard, in the following manner:

Now shall we praise the Prince of heaven,
 The might of the Maker and his manifold thought,
⁴⁵ The work of the Father: of what wonders he wrought,
 The Lord everlasting when he laid out the worlds.
 He first raised up for the race of men
 The heaven as a roof, the holy Ruler.
 Then the world below, the Ward of mankind,
⁵⁰ The Lord everlasting, at last established
 As a home for man, the Almighty Lord.

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Then he arose from his sleep, and all that he had sung while asleep he held fast in memory; and soon afterward he added many words like unto them befitting⁵⁵ a hymn to God. The next morning he came to the steward who was his master and told him of the gift he had received. The steward immediately led him to the abbess and related what he had heard. She bade assemble all the wise and learned men and asked Cædmon to⁶⁰ relate his dream in their presence and to sing the song that they might give their judgment as to what it was or whence it had come. They all agreed that it was a divine gift bestowed from Heaven. They then explained to him a piece of holy teaching and bade him if he could,⁶⁵ to turn that into rhythmic verse. When he received the instruction of the learned men, he departed for his house. In the morning he returned and delivered the passage assigned him, turned into an excellent poem.

Thereupon, the abbess, praising and honoring the⁷⁰ gift of God in this man, persuaded him to leave the condition of a layman and take monastic vows. And this he did with great eagerness. She received him and his household into the monastery and made him one of the company of God's servants and commanded that he⁷⁵ be taught the

holy writings and stories. He, on his part, pondered on all that he learned by word of mouth, and just as a clean beast chews on a cud, transformed it into the sweetest of poetry. His songs and poems were so pleasing that even his teachers came to learn ⁸⁰ and write what he spoke. He sang first of the creation of the earth, and of the origin of mankind, and all the story of Genesis, the first book of Moses; and afterwards of the exodus of the Children of Israel from the land of Egypt and the entry into the Promised Land; ⁸⁵ and many other stories of the Holy Scriptures; the incarnation of Christ, and his suffering and his ascension into heaven; the coming of the Holy Ghost and the teaching of the apostles; and finally he wrote many songs concerning the future day of judgment and of ⁹⁰ the fearfulness of the pains of hell, and the bliss of heaven; besides these he composed many others concerning the mercies and judgments of God. In all of these he strove especially to lead men from the love of sin and wickedness and to impel them toward the love ⁹⁵ and practice of righteousness; for he was a very pious man and submissive to the rules of the monastery. And he burned with zeal against those who acted otherwise. For this reason it was that his life ended with a fair death.

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ALFRED'S PREFACE TO HIS TRANSLATION OF GREGORY'S "PASTORAL CARE"

[Text: Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, pp. 26 ff.]

King Alfred sends greetings to Wærferth in loving and friendly words. I let thee know that it has often come to my mind what wise men there were formerly throughout England among both the clergy and the ⁵ laity, and what happy times there were then throughout England, and how the kings who held sway over the people in those days obeyed God and his ministers; and how they preserved not only their peace but their morality also and good order at home and extended ¹⁰ their possessions abroad; and how prosperous they were both with war and with wisdom; and how zealous the clergy were both in teaching and in learning, and in all the services they owed to God; and how foreigners came to the land in search of wisdom and learning, and ¹⁵ how we should now have to secure them from abroad if we were to have them. So complete was this decay in England that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their rituals in English or translate a Latin letter into English; and I feel sure ²⁰ that there were not many beyond Humber. So few there were that I can not remember a single one south of the Thames when I began to reign. Almighty God be thanked that we have any teachers among us now.... [184]

Then I considered all this, and brought to mind ²⁵ also how, before it had all been laid waste and burned, the churches throughout all England stood filled with treasures and books; and there was a great multitude of God's servants, but they knew very little about the books, for they could not understand anything in them, ³⁰ since they were not written in their own language—as if they spoke thus: "Our fathers who held these places of old loved wisdom and through it acquired wealth and bequeathed it to us. Here we may still see their tracks, but we can not follow them, and hence we have ³⁵ now lost both the wealth and the wisdom, since we would not incline our hearts after their example."

When I called all this to mind, I wondered very much, considering all the good and wise men who were formerly throughout England and all the books that they ⁴⁰ had perfectly learned, that they had translated no part of them into their own language. But soon I answered myself and said: "They did not expect that men should ever become as careless and that learning should decay as it has; they neglected it through the desire that the ⁴⁵ greater increase of wisdom there should be in the land the more should men learn of foreign languages."

I then considered that the law was first found in the Hebrew tongue, and again when the Greeks learned it, they translated it all into their own language. And the ⁵⁰ Romans likewise when they had learned it, they translated it all through learned scholars into their own language. And all other Christian people have turned some part ⁵⁵ into their own language. Wherefore it seems to me best, if it seems so to you, that we should translate ⁶⁰ some books that are most needful for all men to know into the language which we can all understand and that we should bring about what we may very easily do with God's help if we have tranquillity; namely, that all youths that are now in England of ⁶⁵ free birth, who are rich enough to devote themselves to it, be put to learning as long as they are not fitted for any other occupation, until the time that they shall be able to read English writing with ease: and let those that would pursue their studies further be taught more ⁷⁰ in Latin and be promoted to a higher rank. When I brought to mind how the knowledge of Latin had formerly decayed throughout England, and yet many knew how to read English writing, I began among other various and manifold troubles of this kingdom to turn ⁷⁵ into English the book that is called in Latin *Pastoralis* and in English *The Shepherd's Book*, sometimes word for word, sometimes thought by thought, as I had learned it from Plegmund my archbishop, and Asser my bishop, and Grimbold my priest, and John my priest. ⁸⁰ After I had learned it so that I understood it and so that I could interpret it clearly, I translated it into English. I shall send one copy to every bishopric in my kingdom; and in each is a book-mark worth fifty mancuses. And I command in God's name that no man ⁸⁵ take the book-mark from the monastery. It is not certain that there will be such learned bishops as, thanks be to God, we now have nearly everywhere. Hence I wish the books to remain always in their places, unless the bishop wishes to ⁹⁰ take them with him, or they be lent ⁹⁵ out anywhere, or any one be copying them. [186]

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THE CONVERSION OF EDWIN.

[From Alfred's translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Text: Bright, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, p. 62, line 2—p. 63, line 17.]

When the king heard these words, he answered him [Paulinus, who had been preaching Christianity to him] and said that he was not only willing but expected to accept the faith that he taught; the king said, however, ⁵ that he wished to have speech and counsel with his friends and advisers, so that if they accepted the faith with him they might all together be consecrated to Christ, the Fountain of Life. The bishop consented and the king did as he said.

¹⁰ He now counselled and advised with his wise men, and he asked of each of them separately what he thought of the new doctrine and the worship of God that was preached. Cefi, the chief of his priests, then answered, "Consider, oh king, what this teaching is that is now ¹⁵ delivered to us. I declare to you, I have learned for a certainty that the religion we have had up to the present has neither virtue nor usefulness in it. For none of thy servants has applied himself more diligently to the worship of our gods than I, and nevertheless there ²⁰ are many who receive greater gifts and favors from thee than I, and are more prosperous in all their undertakings. I know well that our gods, if they had had any power, would have rewarded me more because I have more faithfully **[188]** served and obeyed them. It seems ²⁵ to me, therefore, wise, if you consider that these new doctrines which are preached to us are better and more efficacious, to receive them immediately."

Assenting to his words, another of the king's wise men and chiefs spoke further: "O king, this present ³⁰ life of man on earth seems to me, in comparison with the time that is unknown to us, as if thou wert sitting at a feast with thine eldermen and thanes in the winter time, and the fire burned brightly and thy hall was warm, and it rained and snowed and stormed outside; ³⁵ there comes then a sparrow and flies quickly through thy house; in through one door he comes, through the other door he goes out again. As long as he is within he is not rained on by the winter storm, but after a twinkling of an eye and a mere moment he goes immediately ⁴⁰ from winter back to winter again. Likewise this life of man appeareth for a little time, but what goes before or what comes after we know not. If therefore this teaching can tell us anything more satisfying or certain, it seems worthy to be followed."

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THE VOYAGES OF OHTHERE AND WULFSTAN

[From Alfred's version of Orosius's *History of the World*. Text used: Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, pp. 38 ff.]

OHTHERE'S VOYAGES

Ohthere told his lord, King Alfred, that he dwelt the farthest north of all the Northmen. He said that he lived in the northern part of the land toward the West Sea. He reported, however, that the land extended very ⁵ far north thence; but that it was all waste, except in a few places here and there where the Finns dwell, engaged in hunting in winter and sea fishing in summer. He said that on one occasion he wished to find out how far the land lay northward, or whether any man inhabited ¹⁰ the waste land to the north. Then he fared northward to the land; for three days there was waste land on his starboard and the wide sea on his larboard. Then he had come as far north as the whale hunters ever go. Whereupon, he journeyed still northward as far as he ¹⁵ could in three days sailing. At that place the land bent to the east—or the sea in on the land, he knew not which; but he knew that there he waited for a west wind, or somewhat from the northwest, and then sailed east, near the land, as far as he could in four days. There he had to ²⁰ wait for a wind from due north, since there the land bent due south—or the sea in on the land, he knew not which. From there he sailed due south, close in to the land, as far as he could in five **[190]** days. At this point a large river extended up into the land. They then followed ²⁵ this river, for they dared not sail beyond it because of their fear of hostile reception, the land being all inhabited on the other side of the river. He had not found any inhabited land since leaving his own home; for the land to the right was not inhabited all ³⁰ the way, except by fishermen, fowlers, and hunters, and these were all Finns; to the left there was always open sea. The Permians had cultivated their soil very well, but they dared not enter upon it. The land of the Terfinns was all waste, except where hunters, fishers, or ³⁵ fowlers dwelt.

The Permians told him many tales both about their own country and about surrounding countries, but he knew not how much was true, for he did not behold it for himself. The Finns and Permians, it appeared to him, ⁴⁰ spoke almost the same language. He went hither on this voyage not only for the purpose of seeing the country, but mainly for walrus, for they have exceedingly good bone in their teeth—they brought some of the teeth to the king—and their hides are very good for ⁴⁵ ship-ropes. This whale is much smaller than other whales; it is not more than seven ells long; but the best whale-fishing is in his own country—those are eight and forty ells long, and the largest are fifty ells long. He said that he was one of a company of six who killed ⁵⁰ sixty of these in two days.

Ohthere was a very rich man in such possessions as make up their wealth, that is, in wild beasts. At the time **[191]** when he came to the king, he still had six hundred tame deer that he had not sold. The men call these ⁵⁵ reindeer. Six of these were decoy-reindeer, which are very valuable among the Finns, for it is with them that the Finns trap the wild reindeer. He was among the first men in the land, although he had not more than twenty cattle, twenty sheep, and twenty swine, and the ⁶⁰ little that he plowed he plowed with horses. Their income, however, is mainly in the tribute that the Finns pay them—animals' skins, birds' feathers, whalebone, and ship-ropes made of the hide of whale and the hide of seal. Every one contributes in proportion to his ⁶⁵ means; the richest must pay fifteen marten skins and five reindeer skins; one bear skin, forty bushels of feathers, a bear-skin or otter-skin girdle, and two ship-ropes, each sixty ells long, one made of the hide of the whale and the other of the hide of the seal.

⁷⁰ He reported that the land of the Northmen was very long and very narrow. All that man can use for either grazing or plowing lies near the sea, and even that is very rocky in some places; and to the east, alongside the inhabited land, lie wild moors. The Finns live ⁷⁵ in these waste lands. And the inhabited land is broadest to the eastward, becoming always narrower the farther north one goes. To the east it may be sixty miles broad, or even a little broader; and in the middle thirty or broader; and to the north, where it was narrowest, ⁸⁰ he said that it might be three miles broad to the moor. Moreover the moor is so broad in some places that it would take a **[192]** man two weeks to cross it. In other places it was of such a breadth that a man can cross it in six days.

⁸⁵ Then there is alongside that land southward, on the other side of the moor, Sweden, as far as the land to the north; and alongside the land northward, the land of the Cwens (Finns). The Finns plunder the Northmen over the

moor sometimes and sometimes the Northmen⁹⁰ plunder them. And there are very many fresh lakes out over the moor; and the Finns bear their ships over the land to these lakes and then ravage the Northmen; they have very small and very light ships.

Ohthere said that the place was called Halgoland, in⁹⁵ which he dwelt. He said that no man lived north of him. There is one port in the southern part of the land which is called Sciringesheal. Thither he said that one might not sail in one month, if he encamped by night and had good wind all day; and all the while he should sail¹⁰⁰ close to land. And on the starboard he has first [Ireland](#), and then the island that is between Ireland and this land. Then he has this land till he comes to Sciringesheal, and all the way he has Norway on the larboard. To the south of Sciringesheal the sea comes far up into¹⁰⁵ the land; the sea is so broad that no man may see across. And Jutland is in the opposite direction, and after that is Zealand. The sea runs many hundred miles up in on that land.

And from Sciringesheal he said that he sailed in five¹¹⁰ days to that port that is called Haddeby; it lies between the country of the Wends and the Saxons and the Angles, and belongs to the Danes. When he sailed away from Sciringesheal for three days, he had Denmark on the larboard and the wide sea on his starboard; and then, **[193]**
¹¹⁵ two days before he reached Haddeby, he had Jutland on his starboard and also Zealand and many islands. In that land had dwelt the English before they came hither to this land. And then for two days he had on his larboard the islands which belong to Denmark.

[100. Ireland:](#) Iceland is probably meant.

WULFSTAN'S VOYAGE

¹²⁰ Wulfstan said that he set out from Haddeby, and that he arrived after seven days and nights at Truso, the ship being all the way under full sail. He had Wendland (Mecklenburg and Pomerania) on the starboard, and Langland, Laaland, Falster, and Sconey on¹²⁵ the larboard; and all these lands belong to Denmark. And then we had on our larboard the land of the Burgundians (Bornholmians), and they have their own king. Beyond the land of the Burgundians we had on our left those lands that were first called Blekinge, and¹³⁰ Meore, and Oland, and Gothland; these lands belong to the Swedes. To the starboard we had all the way the country of the Wends, as far as the mouth of the Vistula. The Vistula is a very large river, and it separates Witland from Wendland; and Witland belongs to the¹³⁵ Esthonians. The Vistula flows out of Wendland, and runs into the Frische Haff. The Frische Haff is about fifteen miles broad. Then the Elbing empties into the Frische Haff, flowing from the east out of the **[194]**
lake on the shore of which Truso stands; and there they empty¹⁴⁰ together into the Frische Haff, the Elbing from the east, which flows out of Esthonia, and the Vistula from the south, out of Wendland. The Vistula then gives its name to the Elbing, and runs out of the mere west and north into the sea; hence it is called the mouth of the¹⁴⁵ Vistula.

Esthonia is very large, and there are many towns there, and in every town there is a king. There is also very much honey, and fishing. The king and the richest men drink mare's milk, but the poor men and the slaves¹⁵⁰ drink mead. There is much strife among them. There is no ale brewed by the Esthonians; there is, however, plenty of mead. And there is a custom among the Esthonians that when a man dies he lies unburied in his house, with his kindred and friends, for a month—sometimes¹⁵⁵ two; and the kings and most powerful men still longer, in proportion to their riches; it is sometimes half a year that they stay unburnt, lying above ground, in their own houses. All the time that the body is within, drinking and merry-making continue until¹⁶⁰ the day that he is burned. The same day on which they are to bear him to the funeral-pyre they divide his possessions, whatever may be left after the drinking and pleasures, into five or six parts—sometimes into more, in proportion to the amount of his goods. Then they¹⁶⁵ place the largest share about a mile from the town, then the second, then the third, until it is all laid within the one mile; and the smallest portion must be nearest the town in which the **[195]**
dead man lies. Then there are gathered together all of the men in the land that have¹⁷⁰ the swiftest horses, about six or seven miles from the goods. Then they all run toward the possessions, and the one who has the swiftest horse comes to the first and largest part, and so one after another till all is taken up; and the man who arrives at the goods nearest the¹⁷⁵ town obtains the smallest part. Then each man rides his way with the property, and he may keep it all; and for this reason fast horses are very dear in that country. When the property is thus all spent, they bear him out and burn him along with his weapons and his raiment.¹⁸⁰ And generally they spend all his wealth, with the long time that the corpse lies within and with the goods that they lay along the roads, and that the strangers run for and bear off with them. Again, it is a custom with the Esthonians to burn men of every tribe,¹⁸⁵ and if any one finds a bone which is unburned he has to make amends for it. And there is one tribe among the Esthonians that has the power of making cold, and it is because they put this cold upon them that the corpses lie so long and do not decay. And if a man¹⁹⁰ places two vessels full of ale or water, they cause both to be frozen over, whether it is summer or winter.

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