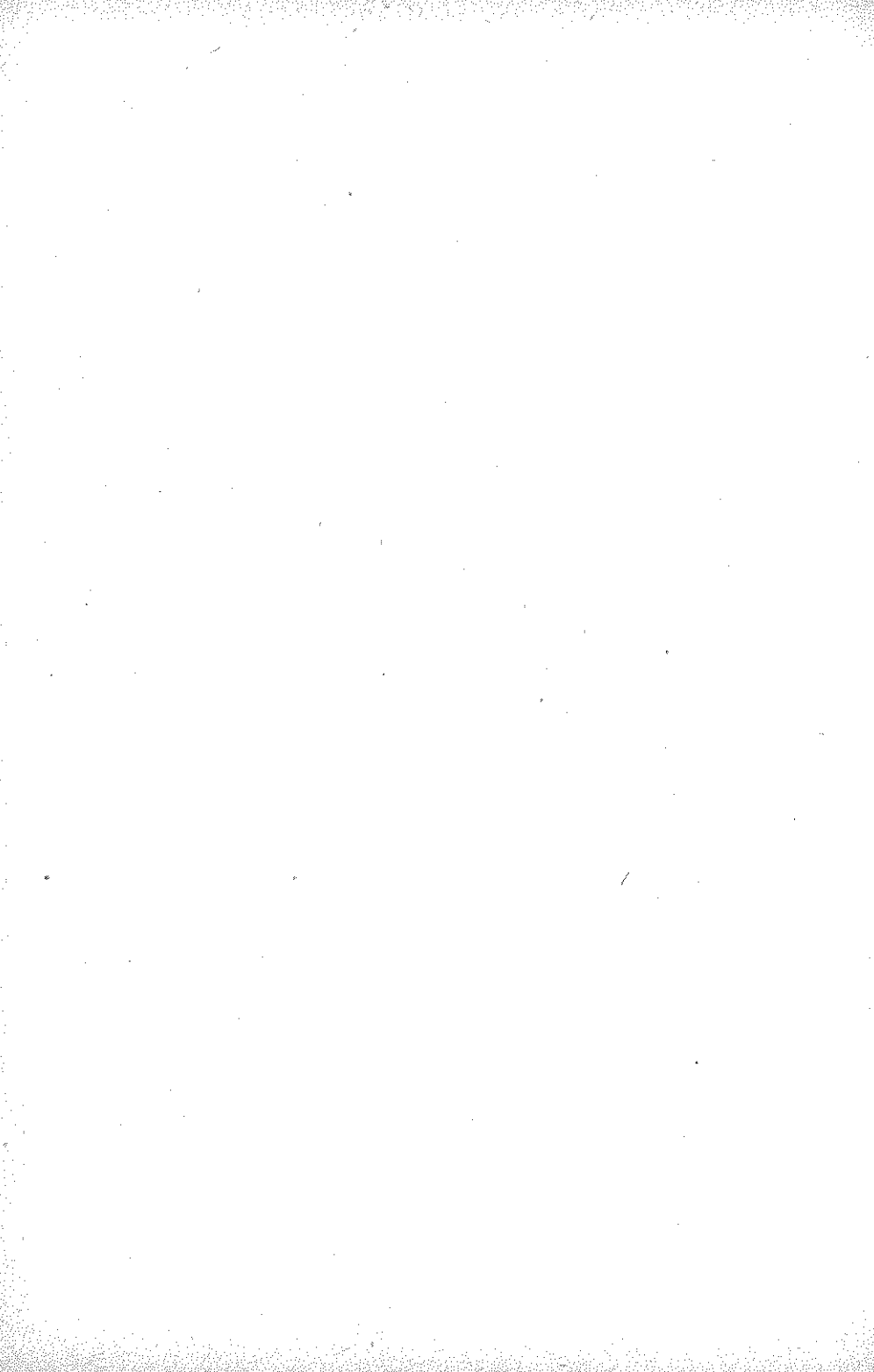


TWO EXTRACTS
FROM
BEOWULF

(PROF. GUMMERE'S TRANSLATION)



FAC. DE LETRAS
PORTO
—
1922



BEOWULF

.....

To Hrothgar was given such glory of war,
such honor of combat, that all his kin
obeyed him gladly till great grew his band
of youthful comrades. It came in his mind
to bid his henchmen a hall uprear,
a master mead-house, mightier far
than ever was seen by the sons of earth,
and within it, then, to old and young
he would all allot that the Lord had sent him,
save only the land and the lives of his men.
Wide, I heard, was the work commanded,
for many a tribe this mid-earth round,
to fashion the folkstead. It fell, as he ordered,
in rapid achievement that ready it stood there,
of halls the noblest: Heorot he named it
whose message had might in many a land.
Not reckless of promise, the rings he dealt,
treasure at banquet: there towered the hall,
high, gabled wide, the hot surge waiting
of furious flame. * * * * *

With envy and anger an evil spirit
endured the dole in his dark abode,
that he heard each day the din of revel
high in the hall: there harps rang out,
clear song of the singer. He sang who knew
tales of the early time of man,
how the Almighty made the earth,
fairest fields enfolded by water,
set, triumphant, sun and moon
for a light to lighten the land-dwellers,
and braided bright the breast of earth
with limbs and leaves, made life for all
of mortal beings that breathe and move.

So lived the clansmen in cheer and revel
a winsome life, till one began
to fashion evils, that fiend of hell.
Grendel this monster grim was called,
march-riever mighty, in moorland living,

in fen and fastness; fief of the giants
 the hapless wight a while had kept 105
 since the Creator his exiles doomed.
 On kin of Cain was the killing avenged
 by sovran God for slaughtered Abel.
 Ill fared his feud, and far was he driven,
 for the slaughter's sake, from sight of men. 110
 Of Cain awoke all that woful breed,
 Etins and elves and evil-spirits,
 as well as the giants that warred with God
 weary while: but their wage was paid them!

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Went he forth to find at fall of night 115
 that haughty house, and heed wherever
 the Ring-Danes, outrevelled, to rest had gone.
 Found within it the atheling band
 asleep after feasting and fearless of sorrow,
 of human hardship. Unhallowed wight, 120
 grim and greedy, he grasped betimes,
 wrathful, reckless, from resting-places,
 thirty of the thanes, and thence he rushed
 fain of his fell spoil, faring homeward,
 laden with slaughter, his lair to seek. 125
 Then at the dawning, as day was breaking,
 the might of Grendel to men was known;
 then after wassail was wail uplifted,
 loud moan in the morn. The mighty chief,
 atheling excellent, unblithe sat, 130
 labored in woe for the loss of his thanes,
 when once had been traced the trail of the fiend
 spirit accurst: too cruel that sorrow,
 too long, too loathsome. Not late the respite;
 with night returning, anew began 135
 ruthless murder; he recked no whit,
 firm in his guilt, of the feud and crime.

They were easy to find who elsewhere sought
 in room remote their rest at night,
 bed in the bowers, when that bale was shown, 140
 was seen in sooth, with surest token,—
 the hall-thane's hate. Such held themselves
 far and fast who the fiend outran!
 Thus ruled unrighteous and raged his fill
 one against all; until empty stood 145
 that lordly building, and long it bode so.
 Twelve years' tide the trouble he bore,
 sovran of Scyldings, sorrows in plenty,
 boundless cares. There came unhidden
 tidings true to the tribes of men, 150
 in sorrowful songs, how ceaselessly Grendel
 harassed Hrothgar, what hate he bore him,
 what murder and massacre, many a year,
 feud unfading,—refused consent
 to deal with any of Daneland's earls, 155
 make pact of peace, or compound for gold:
 still less did the wise men ween to get
 great fee for the feud from his fiendish hands.
 But the evil one ambushed old and young,
 death-shadow dark, and dogged them still, 160
 lured, and lurked in the livelong night
 of misty moorlands: men may say not
 where the haunts of these Hell-Runes be.
 Such heaping of horrors the hater of men,
 lonely roamer, wrought unceasing, 165
 harassings heavy. O'er Heorot he lorded,
 gold-bright hall, in gloomy nights;
 and ne'er could the prince approach his throne,
 —'twas judgment of God,—or have joy in his hall.
 Sore was the sorrow to Scyldings'-friend, 170
 heart-rending misery. Many nobles
 sat assembled, and searched out counsel
 how it were best for bold-hearted men
 against harassing terror to try their hand.
 Whiles they vowed in their heathen fanes 175
 altar-offerings, asked with words
 that the slayer-of-souls would succor give them

for the pain of their people. Their practice this,
 their heathen hope; 'twas Hell they thought of
 in mood of their mind. Almighty they knew not, 180
 Doomsman of Deeds and dreadful Lord,
 nor Heaven's-Helmet heeded they ever,
 Wielder-of-Wonder. — Woe for that man
 who in harm and hatred hales his soul
 to fiery embraces; — nor favor nor change 185
 awaits he ever. But well for him
 that after death-day may draw to his Lord,
 and friendship find in the Father's arms!

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Thus seethed unceasing the son of Healfdene
 with the woe of these days; not wisest men 190
 assuaged his sorrow; too sore anguish,
 loathly and long, that lay on his folk,
 most baneful of burdens and bales of the night.

This heard in his home Hygelac's thane,
 great among Geats, of Grendel's doings. 195
 He was the mightiest man of valor
 in that same day of this our life,
 stalwart and stately. A stout wave-walker
 he bade make ready. Yon battle-king, said he,
 far o'er the swan-road he fain would seek, 200
 the noble monarch who needed men!
 The prince's journey by prudent folk
 was little blamed, though they loved him dear;
 they whetted the hero, and hailed good omens.
 And now the bold one from bands of Geats 205
 comrades chose, the keenest of warriors
 e'er he could find; with fourteen men
 the sea-wood he sought, and, sailor proved,
 led them on to the land's confines.

Time had now flown; afloat was the ship, 210

boat under bluff. On board they climbed,
 warriors ready; waves were churning
 sea with sand; the sailors bore
 on the breast of the bark their bright array,
 their mail and weapons: the men pushed off, 215
 on its willing way, the well-braced craft.
 Then moved o'er the waters by might of the wind
 that bark like a bird with breast of foam,
 till in season due, on the second day,
 the curvéd prow such course had run 220
 that sailors now could see the land,
 sea-cliffs shining, steep high hills,
 headlands broad. Their haven was found,
 their journey ended. Up then quickly
 the Weders clansmen climbed ashore, 225
 anchored their sea-wood, with armor clashing
 and gear of battle: God they thanked
 for passing in peace o'er the paths of the sea.
 Now saw from the cliff a Scylding clansman,
 a warden that watched the water-side, 230
 how they bore o'er the gangway glittering shields,
 war-gear in readiness; wonder seized him
 to know what manner of men they were.
 Straight to the strand his steed he rode,
 Hrotghar's henchman; with hand of might 235
 he shook his spear and spake in parley.
 «Who are ye, then, ye arméd men,
 mailéd folk, that yon mighty vessel
 have urged thus over the ocean ways,
 here o'er the waters? A warden I, 240
 sentinel set o'er the sea-march here,
 lest any foe to the folk of Danes
 with harrying fleet should harm the land.
 No aliens ever at ease thus bore them,
 linden-wielders: yet word-of-leave 245
 clearly ye lack from clansmen here,
 my folk's agreement.—A greater ne'er saw I
 of warriors in world than is one of you,—
 yon hero in harness! No henchman he
 worthied by weapons, if witness his features, 250

his peerless presence! I pray you, though, tell
 your folk and home, lest hence ye fare
 suspect to wander your way as spies
 in Danish land. Now, dwellers afar,
 ocean-travellers, take from me 255
 simple advice: the sooner the better
 I hear of the country whence ye came."

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To him the stateliest spake in answer;
 the warriors' leader his word-board unlocked:—
 "We are by kin of the clan of Geats, 260
 and Hygelac's own heart-fellows we.
 To folk afar was my father known,
 noble atheling, Ecgtheow named.
 Full of winters, he fared away
 aged from earth; he is honored still 265
 through width of the world by wise men all.
 To thy lord and liege in loyal mood
 we hasten hither, to Healfdene's son,
 people-protector: be pleased to advise us!
 To that mighty-one come we on mickle errand, 270
 to the lord of the Danes: nor deem I right
 that aught be hidden. We hear—thou knowest
 if sooth it is—the saying of men,
 that amid the Scyldings a scathing monster,
 dark ill-doer, in dusky nights 275
 shows terrific his rage unmatched,
 hatred and murder. To Hrothgar I
 in greatness of soul would succor bring,
 so the Wise-and-Brave may worst his foes,—
 if ever the end of ill is fated, 280
 of cruel contest, if cure shall follow,
 and the boiling care-waves cooler grow;
 else ever afterward anguish-days
 he shall suffer in sorrow while stands in place

high on its hill that house unpeered!" 285
 Astride his steed, the strand-ward answered,
 clansman unquailing: "The keen-souled thane
 must be skilled to sever and sunder duly
 words and works, if he well intends.
 I gather, this band is graciously bent 290
 to the Scyldings' master. March, then, bearing
 weapons and weeds the way I show you.
 I will bid my men your boat meanwhile
 to guard for fear lest foemen come, —
 your new-tarred ship by shore of ocean 295
 faithfully watching till once again
 it waft o'er the waters those well-loved thanes,
 — winding-neck'd wood, — to Weders' bounds,
 heroes such as the hest of fate
 shall succor and save from the shock of war." 300
 They bent them to march, — the boat lay still,
 fettered by cable and fast at anchor,
 broad-bosomed ship. — Then shone the boars
 over the cheek-guard; chased with gold,
 keen and gleaming, guard it kept 305
 o'er the man of war, as marched along
 heroes in haste, till the hall they saw,
 broad of gable and bright with gold:
 that was the fairest, 'mid folk of earth,
 of houses 'neath heaven, where Hrothgar lived, 310
 and the gleam of it lightened o'er lands afar.

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 Stone-bright the street: it showed the way 320
 to the crowd of clansmen. Corselets glistened
 hand-forged, hard; on their harness bright
 the steel ring sang, as they strode along
 in mail of battle, and marched to the hall.

There, weary of ocean, the wall along 325
 they set their bucklers, their broad shields, down,
 and bowed them to bench: the breastplates clanged,
 war-gear of men; their weapons stacked,
 spears of the seafarers stood together,
 gray-tipped ash: that iron band 330
 was worthily weaponed!—A warrior proud
 asked of the heroes their home and kin.
 «Whence, now, bear ye burnished shields,
 harness gray and helmets grim,
 spears in multitude? Messenger, I, 335
 Hrothgar's herald! Heroes so many
 ne'er met I as strangers of mood so strong.
 'Tis plain that for prowess, not plunged into exile,
 for high-hearted-valor, Hrothgar ye seek!»
 Him the sturdy-in-war bespake with words, 340
 proud earl of the Weders answer made,
 hardy 'neath helmet:—«Hygelac's, we,
 fellows at board; I am Beowulf named.
 I am seeking to say to the son of Healfdene 345
 this mission of mine, to thy master-lord,
 the doughty prince, if he deign at all
 grace that we greet him, the good one, now.»
 Wulfgar spake, the Wendles' chieftain,
 whose might of mind to many was known,
 his courage and counsel: «The king of Danes, 350
 the Scyldings' friend, I fain will tell,
 the Breaker-of-Rings, as the boon thou askest,
 the famed prince, of thy faring hither,
 and, swiftly after, such answer bring 355
 as the doughty monarch may deign to give.»

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Uprose the mighty one, ringed with his men,
 brave band of thanes, some bode without, 400

battle-gear guarding, as bade the chief.
 Then hied that troop where the herald led them,
 under Heorot's roof: (the hero strode)
 hardy 'neath helm, till the hearth he neared.
 Beowulf spake, — his breastplate gleamed, 405
 war-net woven by wit of the smith: —
 "Thou Hrothgar, hail! Hygelac's I,
 kinsman and follower. Fame a plenty
 have I gained in youth! These Grendel-deeds
 I heard in my home-land heralded clear. 410
 Seafarers say how stands this hall,
 of buildings best, for your band of thanes
 empty and idle, when evening sun
 in the harbor of heaven is hidden away.
 So my vassals advised me well, — 415
 brave and wise, the best of men, —
 O sovran Hrothgar, to seek thee here,
 for my nerve and my might they knew full well.
 Themselves had seen me from slaughter come
 blood-flecked from foes, where five I bound, 420
 and that wild brood worsted. 'T' the waves I slew
 nicors by night, in need and peril
 avenging the Weders, whose woe they sought, —
 crushing the grim ones. Grendel now,
 monster cruel, be mine to quell 425
 in single battle! So, from thee,
 thou sovran of the Shining-Danes,
 Scyldings'-bulwark, a boon I seek, —
 and, Friend-of-the-folk, refuse it not,
 O Warriors'-shield, now I've wandered far, — 430
 that I alone with my liegemen here,
 this hardy band, may Heorot purge!
 More I hear, that the monster dire,
 in his wanton mood, of weapons recks not;
 hence shall I scorn — so Hygelac stay, 435
 king of my kindred, kind to me! —
 brand or buckler to bear in the fight,
 gold-colored targe: but with gripe alone
 must I front the fiend and fight for life,
 foe against foe. Then faith be his 440

in the doom of the Lord whom death shall take.
 Fain, I ween, if the fight he win,
 in this hall of gold my Geatish band
 will he fearless eat,—as oft before,—
 my noblest thanes. Nor need'st thou then 445
 to hide my head; for his shall I be,
 dyed in gore, if death must take me;
 and my blood-covered body he'll bear as prey,
 ruthless devour it, the roamer-lonely,
 with my life-blood redden his lair in the fen: 450
 no further for me need'st food prepare!
 To Hygelac send, if Hild should take me,
 best of war-weeds, warding my breast,
 armor excellent, heirloom of Firethel
 and work of Wayland. Fares Wyrð as she must." 455

II

Reclined then the chieftain, and cheek-pillows held
 the head of the earl, while all about him
 seamen hardy on hall-beds sank. 690
 None of them thought that thence their steps
 to the folk and fastness that fostered them,
 to the land they loved, would lead them back!
 Full well they wist that on warriors many
 battle-death seized, in the banquet-hall, 695
 of Danish clan. But comfort and help,
 war-weal weaving, to Weder folk
 the Master gave, that, by might of one,
 over their enemy all prevailed,
 by single strength. In sooth 'tis told 700
 that highest God o'er human kind
 hath wielded ever!—Thro' wan night striding,
 came the walker-in-shadow. Warriors slept
 whose hest was to guard the gabled hall,—

all save one. 'Twas widely known 705
 that against God's will the ghostly ravager
 him could not hurl to haunts of darkness;
 wakeful, ready, with warrior's wrath,
 bold he bided the battle's issue.
 Then from the moorland by misty crags, 710
 with God's wrath laden, Grendel came.
 The monster was minded of mankind now
 sundry to seize in the stately house.
 Under welkin he walked, till the wine-palace there,
 gold-hall of men, he gladly discerned, 715
 flashing with fretwork. Not first time, this,
 that he the home of Hrothgar sought, —
 yet ne'er in his life-day, late or early,
 such hardy heroes, such hall-thanes, found!
 To the house the warrior walked apace, 720
 parted from peace; the portal opened,
 though with forged bolts fast, when his fists had struck it,
 and baleful he burst in his blatant rage,
 the house's mouth. All hastily, then,
 o'er fair-paved floor the fiend trod on, 725
 ireful he strode; there streamed from his eyes
 fearful flashes, like flame to see.
 He spied in hall the hero-band,
 kin and clansmen clustered asleep,
 hardy liegemen. Then laughed his heart; 730
 for the monster was minded, ere morn should dawn,
 savage, to sever the soul of each,
 life from body, since lusty banquet
 waited his will! Bud Wyrð forbade him
 to seize any more of men on earth 735
 after that evening. Eagerly watched
 Hygelac's kinsman his cursed foe,
 how he would fare in fell attack.
 Not that the monster was minded to pause!
 Straightway he seized a sleeping warrior 740
 for the first, and tore him fiercely assunder,
 the bone-frame bit, drank blood in streams,
 swallowed him piecemeal: swiftly thus
 the lifeless corse was clear devoured,

e'en feet and hands. Then farther he hied; 745
 for the hardy hero with hand de grasped,
 felt for the foe with fiendish claw,
 for the hero reclining, — who clutched it boldly,
 prompt to answer, propped on his arm.
 Soon then saw that shepherd-of-evils 750
 that never he met in this middle-world,
 in the ways of earth, another wight
 with heavier hand-gripe; at heart he feared,
 sorrowed in soul, — none the sooner escaped!
 Fain would he flee, his fastness seek, 755
 the den of devils: no doings now
 such as oft he had done in days of old!
 Then bethought him the hardy Hygelac-thane
 of his boast at evening: up he bounded.
 grasped firm his foe, whose fingerz cracked. 760
 The fiend made off, but the earl close followed.
 The monster meant — if he might at all —
 to fling himself free, and far away
 fly to the fens, — knew his fingers' power
 in the gripe of the grim one. Gruesome march 765
 to Heorot this monster of harm had made!
 Din filled the room; the Danes were bereft,
 castle-dwellers and clansmen all,
 earls, of their ale. Angry were both
 those savage hall-guards: the house resounded. 770
 Wonder it was the wine-hall firm
 in the strain of their struggle stood, to earth
 the fair house fell not; too fast it was
 within and without by its iron bands
 craftily clamped; though there crashed from sill 775
 many a mead-bench — men have told me —
 gay with gold, where the grim foes wrestled.
 So well had weened the wisest Scydings
 that not ever at all might any man
 that bone-decked, brave house break assunder, 780
 crush by craft, — unless clasp of fire
 in smoke engulfed it. — Again uprose
 din redoubled. Danes of the North
 with fear and frenzy were filled, each one,

who from the wall that wailing heard, 785
 God's foe sounding his girslly song,
 cry of the conquered, clamorous pain
 from captive of hell. Too closely held him
 he who of men in might was strongest
 in that same day of this our life. 790

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Not in any wise would the earls' defence
 suffer that slaughterous stranger to live,
 useless deeming his days and years
 to men on earth. Now many an earl 795
 of Beowulf brandished blade ancestral,
 fain the life of their lord to shield,
 their praised prince, if power were theirs;
 never they knew, — as they neared the foe,
 hardy-hearted heroes of war,
 aiming their swords on every side 800
 the accursed to kill, — no keenest blade,
 no fairest of falchions fashioned on earth,
 could harm or hurt that hideous fiend!
 He was safe, by his spells, from sword of battle,
 from edge of iron. Yet his end and parting 805
 on that same day of this our life
 woful should be, and his wandering soul
 far off flit to the fiends' domain.
 Soon he found, who in former days,
 harmful in heart and hated of God, 810
 on many a man such murder wrought,
 that the frame of his body failed him now.
 For him the keen-souled kinsman of Hygelac
 held in hand; hateful alive
 was each to other. The outlaw dire 815
 took mortal hurt, a mighty wound
 showed on his shoulder, and sinews cracked,
 and the bone-frame burst. To Beowulf now

the glory was given, and Grendel thence
 death-sick his den in the dark moor sought, 820
 noisome abode: he knew too well
 that here was the last of life, an end
 of his days on earth. — To all the Danes
 by that bloody battle the boon had come.
 From ravage had rescued the roving stranger 825
 Hrothgar's hall; the hardy and wise one
 had purged it anew. His night-work pleased him,
 his deed and its honor. To eastern Danes
 had the valiant Geat his vaunt made good,
 all their sorrow and ills assuaged, 830
 their bale of battle borne so long,
 and all the dole they erst endured,
 pain a-plenty. — 'Twas proof of this,
 when the hardy-in-fight a hand laid down,
 arm and shoulder, — all, indeed, 835
 of Grendel's gripe, — 'neath the gabled roof.
 Many at morning, as men have told me,
 warriors gathered the gift-hall round,
 folk-leaders faring from far and near,
 o'er wide-stretched ways, the wonder to view, 840
 trace of the traitor. * * * * *