

Beowulf and the Finnsburg Fragment by John Clark Hall

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*Beowulf and the Finnsburg Fragment.* A translation into Modern English Prose. By JOHN CLARK HALL. Second Edition. London: Sonnenschein. 1911. 8vo. lxvi + 287 pp.

A second and revised edition of Dr Clark Hall's translation of *Beowulf* is welcome, for it is probably the best working translation that we have, while it is enriched by a valuable introduction and excellent appendices. The translation has been carefully revised, and the alterations are almost uniformly in the direction of greater accuracy and precision. It is perhaps to be regretted that the translator is less conservative as to the text than he was in the first edition. He adheres less closely to his foundation-text, that of Wyatt, and is inclined to accept a good many of the conjectures which have been so freely offered by later editors and commentators. The chief example of this is in the Finn episode where the interpretation is changed almost entirely.

The translation is at times marred by the use of modern technical terms which give misleading renderings of the Old English word, e.g. 'borough' for 'burh' (523), 'subaltern' for 'cniht' (535) and for 'scealc' (940). 'Bower' is not happy as a rendering of 'bur' (1311) and 'salamander' is scarcely applicable to the fiery dragon (2689). In Old English similes 'gelicost' should be translated by the positive: the superlative is the stereotyped form in Old English (985, 1609). 'Survivances of filing' (1032), 'sapient' (1400, 1475) are not happy; 'swine-figures' (1453) should be 'boar-figures' and so careful an archaeologist as Dr Hall should keep the plural 'hilts' (1614). 'Aeschere's dead' (1323) is too colloquial, 'winters' (1724) should be 'years,' while 'crowed' (2583) seems awkward as a translation of 'gealp.' There should be some uniformity in the anglicising of the plural of proper names—e.g., Ingwines (1319), Hetwaras (2363), Weders (2462), while 'Scyldings' for 'Scylfings' (2205) remains uncorrected.

In a few passages the translator seems to have misunderstood the original. In l. 988 'heardra' is surely gen. pl. dependent on 'nan,' in l. 2226 'fealh' is certainly 'penetrated,' not 'fell.' 'Ðe' in l. 2638 is not the relative particle.

The appendix on 'things' mentioned in *Beowulf* has been happily enlarged, and both here and in his notes Dr Hall has made good use of modern archaeological work, more especially of the articles of the lamented Knut Stjerna. It is pleasant to know that we are soon to have an English translation of these articles as a whole. The Bibliography has been enlarged and brought up to date and misses very little. Chadwick's *Origin of the English Nation* should have been mentioned, as it throws much light on various episodes in *Beowulf*. The Notes are useful, and together with those of Dr Sedgfield furnish a commentary which has been long wanting to those English students who are unacquainted with German.

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