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literary world. And yet it is the earliest known attempt, in any vernacular dialect of modern Europe, to produce an epic poem; and far from being a dull and tedious imitation of some Greek or Latin examples,—like most modern epics,—is an original Gothic performance; and if there be in me any spark of poetic feeling, I have no hesitation in affirming, that any poet, of any age, might have been proud to produce such a work, while the country which gave him birth might well be proud of him in return. I know there are tastes, called classical, which will turn away in disgust when they are told that this poem consists of two fabulous adventures, not very artificially connected, except by the person of the hero,—and that these episodes, which relate to historical traditions of the North, are rather unskillfully inserted. But I think such classical scholars as have a squeamish repugnance to all Gothic productions, should remember that, when they settle themselves down in the little circle of the ancient world, they have banished themselves from the modern, and, consequently, have made their opinions on such a subject of very little importance. Hence, without calling that artificial which is rude, or that masterly which is childish, whether of ancient or modern date, I will merely observe that Beowulf, the Gothic hero of the poem, combats, in the prime of his life, with Grendel and his mother, two goblins, who are the foes of Hrothgar, King of Denmark; and in his old age fights with Steorc-heart, the fiery dragon, which, during a thousand years, has brooded on unprofitable gold; and in this encounter, though victorious loses his life. Now, it is evident that such a tale may be told in a very absurd manner, but it is equally clear that it may also be embodied in a very lofty and interesting strain; and for my own part I have no desire for the converse of any man who would not be delighted with the simple yet animated dialogue, the beautiful descriptions, and the noble sentiments which abound in Beowulf. When I also remember how distinctly and vividly the characters of the principal personages are drawn and supported,—of Beowulf, the hero,—of Wiglaf, his youthful and enthusiastic friend,—of Hrothgar, the royal bard and philosopher,—I cannot but feel regret that time has not spared us the name of this early Gothic Homer, and my wonder is lessened that a master-spirit like Shakspeare could

arise in the country where the very children of her poetry should have attempted and achieved such master-strokes of genius.

There can be little advantage in offering reasons why this poem, though spoken highly of by Wanley, should remain unnoticed till the present age, but some account of the first and only edition of it may be necessary. In the year 1783, the late John Thorkelin was sent to England by the Danish Government, where he made a transcript of the only manuscript containing it, and which was then considerably damaged by the fire of 1731 in the Cottonian Library. At length, in the year 1815, he gave it to the world, at the recommendation and at the charge of a Danish nobleman, Count Bulow, prefixing to it a singular title, and accompanying it with an equally singular Latin version. Now, though the transcript on the whole was accurately done, yet the printed text is so erroneous, that it can only be exceeded by the translation; and the edition, therefore, reflects disgrace rather than credit on the country where it appeared. The late Count Bulow was aware of this, and having prevailed upon me to prepare a Danish translation, which has now been published some years, he was also solicitous that I should undertake a new edition of the original, which was likewise to have been published at his charge. This, at the time, I declined, chiefly because I held it necessary to collate the original. This collation I have now made; and should the poem not appear in England, I shall still feel myself called upon to publish it at home.

Beowulf, therefore, with an English introduction and translation, such as, by the assistance of my English friends, I might be able to make them, would fill two volumes of this intended series. The third would contain Caedmon's poetical paraphrase of Genesis, with the continuations or imitations that are to be found in the old edition itself, in the Heptateuch, or elsewhere.

According to Bede, in his Ecclesiastical History, there arose, at the close of the seventh century, an eminent Anglo-Saxon poet of the name of Caedmon, who confined himself to religious subjects, and in particular to a paraphrase of the historical books of Scripture. In the Junian collection at Oxford, there is still preserved an