

## “The Burning of Beowulf’s Body”

**THEN** fashioned for him the folk of Geats  
firm on the earth a funeral-pile,  
and hung it with helmets and harness of war  
and breastplates bright, as the boon he asked;  
and they laid amid it the mighty chieftain,  
heroes mourning their master dear.  
Then on the hill that hugest of balefires  
the warriors wakened. Wood-smoke rose  
black over blaze, and blent was the roar  
of flame with weeping (the wind was still),  
till the fire had broken the frame of bones,  
hot at the heart. In heavy mood  
their misery moaned they, their master's death.  
Wailing her woe, the widow<sup>1</sup> old,  
her hair upbound, for Beowulf's death  
sung in her sorrow, and said full oft  
she dreaded the doleful days to come,  
deaths enow, and doom of battle,  
and shame. -- The smoke by the sky was devoured.  
The folk of the Weders fashioned there  
on the headland a barrow broad and high,  
by ocean-farers far descried:  
in ten days' time their toil had raised it,  
the battle-brave's beacon. Round brands of the pyre  
a wall they built, the worthiest ever  
that wit could prompt in their wisest men.  
They placed in the barrow that precious booty,  
the rounds and the rings they had reft erewhile,  
hardy heroes, from hoard in cave, --  
trusting the ground with treasure of earls,  
gold in the earth, where ever it lies  
useless to men as of yore it was.  
Then about that barrow the battle-keen rode,  
atheling-born, a band of twelve,  
lament to make, to mourn their king,  
chant their dirge, and their chieftain honor.  
They praised his earlship, his acts of prowess  
worthily witnessed: and well it is  
that men their master-friend mightily laud,  
heartily love, when hence he goes  
from life in the body forlorn away.

Thus made their mourning the men of Geatland,  
for their hero's passing his hearth-companions:  
quoth that of all the kings of earth,  
of men he was mildest and most beloved,  
to his kin the kindest, keenest for praise.