



JUDITH, PHOENIX

AND OTHER ANGLO-SAXON POEMS

TRANSLATED

FROM THE GREIN-WÜLKER TEXT

BY

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414128
22.7.43

SILVER, BURDETT AND COMPANY

NEW YORK

BOSTON

CHICAGO

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES.

A.-S. = Anglo-Saxon.

B. = Baskervill's *Andreas*.

Br. = Stopford Brooke's *Early English Literature*.

Bri. = Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*.

BT. = Bosworth-Toller *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*.

C. = Cook's *Judith* and *Anglo-Saxon Reader*.

Ett. = Ettmüller's *Scopas*.

Gar. = Garnett's translations of *Judith*, *Maldon*, and *Brunnanburh*.

Gr. = Grein's *Bibliothek*, *Dichtungen*, and *Sprachschatz*.

G.-W. = Grein-Wülker *Bibliothek*.

W. = Wülker's Notes in the G.-W. *Bibliothek*.

THE PHŒNIX.

[This beautiful allegory is generally regarded as one of the finest products of the Anglo-Saxon poetical genius. It is less known to the cultivated, non-technical student than several other poems of our early literature; and one aim of the present volume is to supply this deficiency, and put this noble poem before that kind audience who have listened patiently to our earlier experiments in the Old English field.]

As to the high literary merits of the *Phœnix*, there is no dissenting voice. Sweet says that it has "all of Cynewulf's grace and harmony of thought and language." Brooke and ten Brink speak of it in terms of high praise; and Professor J. W. Bright, who has studied the poem in all its phases, says: "In grace and simplicity of style, in the elaboration and clearness of figure, in lyric beauty, and in richness of description, this poem must be classed with the best productions of Anglo-Saxon times."

As to the authorship, there is more diversity of opinion. Brooke and ten Brink attribute it to Cynewulf [A.D. 725 (?)—c. 800 (?)]. Sweet thinks that there is "little doubt" that he wrote it. Professor J. W. Bright, on the other hand, says that "it is almost certainly not to be attributed to Cynewulf." Gaebler, a German scholar, after an exhaustive study of its vocabulary, phraseology and grammatical structure, assigned it to him; while a detailed and laborious study of its metres led two other scholars, Cremer and Mather, to a contrary conclusion. More recently, Professor Edward Fulton, an American scholar, after weighing carefully and sifting the arguments of the three last named, and studying the poem on the side of style, decides against its Cynewulfian authorship.

It is quite generally thought that the poem belongs to the Northumbrian cycle, and to the "school" of Cynewulf.

Most scholars think that the Anglo-Saxon poet took his subject from the Latin poem *Carmen de Phœnice*, attributed to Firmianus Lactantius, who was tutor to Crispus, son of the Emperor Constantine the Great, and whom Jerome speaks of as a poet. (This Latin poem can be found in Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, pp. 189-193.) Our poet, however, if he used this poem, expanded, embellished, glorified it. The poem of Lactantius has 380 lines; his, 677. Lactantius tells us of the fabled bird of the east that rose from its ashes; the old English poet, starting with this fabled bird and its delightful land, tells

us of the Christian who, refined and purified by fiery trials, rises from his ashes to a new life here and a life of immortal joys in the world to come, and also of the Divine Phoenix, who soars high through the heavens followed by throngs of blissful and triumphant spirits of just men made perfect.

Our poet may never have read or even heard of the poem attributed to Lactantius. The Phoenix legend, or saga, is almost as old as the human race. A fabled bird, under various names, was familiar in ancient Egyptian hymns and incantations as the symbol of the sun. Herodotus made it well known to the Greek imagination. Pliny, Tacitus, and others tell us that it was no stranger to the Romans. St. Ambrose and Bede show us how the great bird captured the imagination of the early church, and was regarded as a symbol of the Sun of Righteousness, who arose with healing in his wings.¹ Certainly no subject could more readily have inspired a pious poet of any era of English literature.

The complete Anglo-Saxon text is readily accessible in Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, and less so in the Grein-Wülker *Bibliothek*, Vol. III, pp. 95-116. One of the choicest passages is given in Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*.

Translations are not accessible; a few fine passages are rendered with grace and beauty in Brooke's *Hist. of Early Eng. Lit.* (See index).]

The poet describes the Happy Land where the Phoenix lives.

In legend and lay, I have learned that eastward
Far away hence is the fairest of countries
Known to the races. That region of midearth
'Neath the arch of the ether not ever is reached of
Folk-leaders many, but is far sundered
From ill-doers' evil by All-Father's power.
'Tis a beauteous expanse, resplendent with pleasures,
'Mid odors fragrantest that earth ever breatheth :
Peerless is the island, the Creator noble,
10 Most mighty, lofty, who that land established.
There ever and aye eminent melodies
Await the redeemed, heaven's gate open.
'Tis a delightful land, there living-green forests
Stretch far under heaven. There nor rain nor snow,
Nor breath of the frost, nor blast of the fire,
Nor fall of the hail, nor bite of the rime,
Nor the sun's heat weary, nor ceaseless chill,

¹ Is the prophet Malachi (iv : 2) referring to the promised Messiah under the figure of the fabled bird of the east?

- Nor warm weather, nor winter's shower,
 May anywise injure, but ever the place is
 20 Blessèd, perfect : that noble land
 Bloometh and blossometh. Nor boulders nor mountains
 Do steep stand there ; no stone-cliffs precipitous
 Tower aloft, as here so oft,
 Nor dales nor vales, nor darksome caverns,
 Nor mounds nor hills, nor slopeth¹ there ever
 Aught of ruggedness : but the excellent plain
 Blossometh under heaven, blooming joyous :
 30 As wise men of old in their books have told,
 From research have written, that region glorious,
 That beauteous land, is a twelve-fathom higher
 Than the loftiest heights that lift their heads up
 High heavenward here 'neath the welkin.
 Placid the plain is, the pleasant forest,
 The bright grove, gleameth : glorious blossoms,
 Fruits, never fall there ; but, foliage-clad,
 As God-Father bade, the trees stand ever.
 Winter and summer, the wood ever is
 Laden with blossoms : the leaves never
 Fall to the earth there, no fire shall injure them
 40 Forever and ever, till the end of the world shall
 Come in the ages. As the ocean's might,
 The tumbling currents, once covered the earth o'er,
 O'er the round world rolled, wrapping and folding it
 In their big embraces, when this beauteous plain,
 This spacious expanse, spared by the waters,
 Stood firm 'gainst the flood of the far-dashing billows,
 Blessèd, unmarred, through the mercy of Heaven :
 So it bideth blooming till the blaze cometh
 Of the day of the Lord, when graves shall open
 And the dark caverns of heroes their dead shall surrender.]

The Flood did
 not injure this
 and.

¹ BT. = *Nor does aught unsmooth rest there.*—Gr. = *noch erhebt sich da unsüßes irgend.*—Br. = *lean, incline, slope*; we follow him.—Lactantius has *net tumulus crescit.*

- 50 In that land of bliss, no foe harasseth,
Nor tears nor trouble, no token of sorrow,
Age, penury, nor death the narrow,
Nor the loss of life, nor the loathed foe's coming,
Sin, dissension, sore tribulation,
No wrestling with want, of riches no lack there,
Nor sorrow, nor sleep,¹ nor sickness grievous,
Nor the winter's storm, nor the wind's raging,
Bleak under heaven, and the biting frost
Not any one striketh with icicles freezing.
- 60 There hail and hoarfrost from heaven fall not,
Nor windy cloud, there no water falleth,
Lashed by the air : but living streams,
Fairest of fountains, freely gush there,
Laving earth's bosom with billows of loveliness,
Winsome waters from the wood's-heart flowing,
Which sea-cold bubble from the bosom of earth as
The moons move on, compass anon
The whole wood grandly : 'tis the Lord's behest that
This land of glory the beautiful waters
- 70 Shall twelve times traverse. The trees bend there
With fruits fairest : there fade not ever
Holy under heaven the holt's ornaments,
Fallow blossoms fall not to earthward,
The wood's garniture : but wondrously there
On the boughs ever the branches are laden,
Oft and anon new fruit blossometh,
On the grass-plain green, glorious in verdure,
- 80 Stands the fairest of groves decked joyously

¹ That the A.-S. poet is inspired partly by the last two chapters of the book of *Revelation*, the reader need not be told; but it may be mentioned that the poets have apparently *inferred* that there is to be no sleep in heaven, since there is no night and no sin. — For an interesting discussion of the passage before us (l. 56), see articles by Professors J. M. Hart and A. S. Cook, *Modern Language Notes*, May and November, 1899. — Lactantius does not mention 'sleep,' but "sleepless cares."

By the might of the Wielder. The wood is nowise
 Shorn of its beauty, where the blessèd fragrance
 Is diffused o'er that joy-land ; that ne'er shall be changed
 Forever and ever, till All-Knowing God
 Who erstwhile created shall that old-work demolish.

II.

The guardian of
 the wood.

The ward of that wood is a wondrous-beautiful,
 Fleet-wingèd bird Phœnix entitled.
 There the feathery hermit hath his lone dwelling,
 Brave bideth¹ there : in that blessèd place
 Death shall ne'er injure him while the earth standeth.
 90 He must watch and ward the world-candle's² journey
 And go forth greeting God's bright lantern,²
 The glittering jewel,² gladly watching
 When the noblest of stars² climbeth the heavens
 From the east shining sheen o'er the waters,
 The All-Father's old-work² in ornaments gleaming,
 God's bright token.² The stars are hidden,
 Gone 'neath the ocean off to the westward,
 Bedimmed in the dawn, and the dark night lurid
 Fleëth the firmament : then, the Phœnix bird,
 Mighty of motion, marketh the ocean,
 100 Exultant of wing, watcheth the mountain-stream,
 Eagerly looketh aloft when there cometh
 Up from the east o'er the ocean gliding
 The Lord's bright lantern lavishing lustre.
 So the noble bird remains at the fountain,
 Brilliant in beauty, bides at the water,
 Where twelve times the glorious one bathes in the current,
 Ere God's bright beacon glides o'er the earth-ways,

The great bird
 watches the sun.

¹ Some high authorities treat *drohta* (l. 88) as a substantive; others, as a verb. We follow the latter.

² The A.-S. poet draws freely upon his stock of epithets for the sun.

The torch of the ether, and as oft quaffeth he
 110 Ocean-cold draughts from those excellent fountains
 When he dips in those waters. His wave-sportings done,
 To a tall tree-top he betaketh him proudly
 Where most easily eastward he is able to watch
 The sun's journey when the taper of heaven
 O'er the boiling billows brilliantly glimmereth,
 Luminous with lustre. Lands are embellished,
 The world made beauteous, when the bright gem of
 glory
 O'er the ocean's paths, through earth and her regions,
 Grandest of stars, the ground illumines.
 120 As¹ soon as the sun o'er the salt-streams riseth,
 High overtow'rth them, the tawny-winged bird
 Glorious leaves the tree of the forest,
 Through the firmament flieth on fleet wing upward,
 Chanteth and singeth as he soars heavenward.
 The bird's demeanor² is so comely and pleasing,
 His spirit inspired, then, sparkling with joyance ;
 More wondrously raiseth he the tones of his music,
 His glorious voice, than the children of men
 E'er heard under heaven, since high-ruling God,
 130 Wielder of Glory, the world founded,
 The earth and the heavens. The sound of his voice is
 Sweeter, more beautiful than song ever uttered,
 Winsomer far than any of melodies ;
 Nor trumpets nor horns can equal that music,
 Nor the harp's harmony, nor heroes' voices
 Any on earth, nor organ's melody,

Such music is
 never heard
 among men.

¹ Commenting on the passage ll. 120-144 in our text, Br. says, "I wonder that there are still folk who think that there is no poetry in early England."

² We have followed BT. and Gr., though the context, by expatiating upon the tones of the bird, might justify us in translating '*cries*'; i.e., '*The cries of the bird are so beautiful*,' etc. Moreover, Lactantius dwells with great emphasis upon the "song," "voice," etc.

- Nor bagpipe's notes,¹ nor swan's feathers,²
 Nor any harmony that Heaven created
 For men's merriment in this mournful existence !
 140 So sings he and chants with joys blissful,
 Till the sun southward sinks 'neath the welkin :
 He listeneth in silence, his head bowing, then,
 Wise, firm-mooded, and his fleet pinions
 Thrice fluttereth : the Phoenix is silent.
 Twelve times ever, the hours marketh he
 Of day and of night. So the bird is the forest's
 Dweller and denizen deemed, that he enjoyeth
 The place at his pleasure, its plenty, riches,
 150 Its life and delights, the land's ornaments,
 Till the guard of the grove hath gone through a thousand³
 Of this world's winters. 'Neath the weight of age, then,
 The dusky-feathered one droops for a season,
 Old, aged one : the excellent bird, then,
 Flieth away, the green earth leaveth,
 The fields blossoming, to find him a spacious
 Kingdom of earth where not any of men have
 Home and fatherland. There, high over bird-kind,
 Mighty, illustrious, dominion he wieldeth,
 160 'Mid that folk preëminent, and awhile along with them
 The waste places wardeth.⁴ Then, west goeth he,
 Mighty of motion, with many years burdened,

In this secluded
 spot, he stays
 long as king of
 birds.

¹ Our translation follows quite closely the G.-W. text; but this passage (136 (b)–137 (a)) is rendered differently by some scholars; e.g., *organ's tone, song's melody; nor organ's tone, nor harmonious lay; nor the organ tone, nor the singing of the sackbut, etc., etc.*

² The swan's singing his death-song is familiar; but the singing of the feathers is unusual. For valuable note, see Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, p. 228.

³ Bri. and some others say *thousands*; but Lact. has *mille*. Also cf. l. 364, below.

⁴ Gr. construed **him** (l. 160) as sing., and **weardað** (l. 161), as plu., and translated: *a while with him they inhabit the waste places*. **Weardað**, however, is a sing., and its subj. is **he** (l. 158).

On fleet wing flying, the feathery tribe
Throng the noble one : each of them fain
Would be liegeman and thane to the illustrious atheling,
Till he himself seeketh the Syrians' land
With the greatest of retinues. Thither the pure one
Hies him hurriedly, and holds in the shade,
In the grove inhabits, a gloomy, desolate
170 Place that is hidden from heroes a-many,
Where in a lofty tree, he lives in the forest,
A firm-rooted tree 'neath the dome of the heavens,
Which folk on the earth Phoenix entitle
From the name of the bird. The renowned Glory-King,
Creator of Earthmen, I ever have heard,
Hath that tree granted that it and it only
Of all trees on earth upward a-towering
Bloometh most beauteously : nor blight nor blast
180 May anywise harm it, but, ever protected,
It abideth uninjured while the earth lasteth.

God blesses this
tree for the bird's
sake.

III.

Then, the wind lulleth, the weather is calm,
The pure gem of heaven holy shineth,
The clouds disperse, the expanse of waters
Do stand still there, the storms utterly
Soothed under heaven, from the south shineth
The weather-torch warm, for world-folk beameth :
Then, the bird in the boughs his building beginneth,
His nest fashioning ; he must needs speedily
190 Old age quicken by ardor of spirit,
His youth renew. From near and from far, then,
He gathereth and gleaneth the goodliest of winsome
Plants and wood-blooms up in his dwelling-place,
Each excellent[odor] from herbs fragrant,
From sweet things on earth that the Sovereign of Glory,
The Creator of all things, on earth fashioned

The Phoenix now
gathers the
choicest plants
and herbs, and
builds a nest.

- For the honor of earth-folk. Up to that tree, then,
 200 He early beareth the excellent treasures ;
 The wild bird 'gins, then, to build in the desert
 In a tall tree's boughs a biding-place lovely,
 An abode beautiful, and abideth therein,
 Far aloft liveth, in the leafy shade
 Batheth and steepeth his body and plumage
 On all sides fully with odors holy,
 And the noblest blooms and blossoms of earth.
 He sitteth there anxious and eager for the journey,
 When, in the summer season, the sun at its hottest
 210 O'er the shade shineth, sheen gem of heaven,
 Fulfils its destiny¹ and the world surveyeth :
 His home grows hot through the heat of the sun, then,
 The herbs warm up, the excellent dwelling
 Breathes and exhaleth the sweetest of odors,
 And the bird with its nest through the fire's clutches
 Burns in the blaze : the bale-fire is kindled ;
 Then, the blaze embraces the abode of the sad one,
 Is cruelly busy,² the yellow flame
 Eats it, and the Phœnix ancient of days
 In the fire burneth. Then, the blaze swalloweth
 220 His frail body, his life departeth,
 The doomed one's spirit, when the death-fire burneth
 His flesh and his bones. There shall come again, nathless,
 In the lapse of the years new life to the Phœnix.
 Again thereafter, the ashes begin to
 Gather together, when the great fire is over,
 A ball fashioning, when fully consumed in
 The flame's grapple the greatest of nests is,
 The brave one's abode : his body cooleth,
 His bone-house is broken, and the blaze subsideth.
 230 From the pyre's ashes, thereafter appeareth

The nest and the
 bird are con-
 sumed in the
 flame.

¹ This peculiar phrase is literally taken from the A.-S., and is so rendered by Bri., Gr., BT.

² Grein says, *Das Feuer ist im Zuge*; we follow BT., and Bri. glossary.

The image of an apple¹ issuing marvellous,
 Whence a worm¹ waxeth wondrously beautiful,
 As if forth from an egg it had sprung into being,
 From a shell, beauteous ; in the shade groweth it,
 Till at first it resembleth a fair young bird,
 The chick of an eagle ; then, on liveth it
 Longer in life-joys, till it is like in form to
 The old eagle, and thereafter anon is
 Furbished with feathers as at first it had been,
 240 Brilliantly blooming : then, the bird (?)² waxeth
 Youthful again, [is from sins parted,
 Like as³ one beareth the fruits of the earth
 Homeward at harvest, health-giving nourishment,
 For life's sustenance, at the time of the reaping,
 Ere winter approacheth, lest the pouring rain-storms
 On the earth injure them ; thereafter, plenty,
 Board-joys they find there, when frost and snow
 With might overmastering mantle earth's bosom
 250 In the garments of winter ; from those fruits afterward
 Must earth-folk's riches be reaped, harvested
 By the sprouting of grain, which springeth from pure
 Seed erstwhile sown, when the sun's radiance,
 The symbol of life, in the spring season

The regeneration
 of the bird begins.

The stages of its
 growth.

¹ This is only one of the numerous forms that this legend assumed during its long course through Egyptian, Roman, and mediæval periods. — Lact. has *seminis instar*.

² *Bræd* (l. 240) is not understood. We follow Gr.'s translation, and the conjecture of Bri., J. R. C. Hall, and others.

³ We here enter upon an unusually long, labored simile; so long, indeed, that the poet can hardly maintain his equilibrium. Several eminent textual critics have tried to patch up this passage; but the results are not yet entirely satisfactory. We have kept close to the G.-W. text, but found Bri.'s punctuation more helpful than W.'s — The *Beowulf* poet, whoever he is, seems to break down in the middle of a simile about as long as this. Cf. Hall's *Trans. of B.*, pp. 82-83, note. — The *Phœnix* poet is clearing the way to tell us that the bird is the symbol of the new life in the Christian soul; but first he must exhibit him as "the symbol of the sun."

The regeneration of the Phoenix is compared to the growth of the grain, which "is not quickened except it die."

- Folk-wealth awaketh, so that the fruits of the land,
 The earth's ornaments, by their own germination
 Are brought forth thereafter : so the old bird waxeth
 Young after years, his youth reneweth
 With flesh again furnished. No food taketh he,
 260 Naught to eat on earth, save only a portion
 Of honey-dew¹ tasteth he, which at midnight often
 On the blossoms falleth : thus the fearless bird
 His life feedeth till his former dwelling-place,
 His own home, again, thereafter seeketh he.

IV.

- Then, proud of his plumage, with plants surrounded
 The bird is now grown, his life renewed is,
 Young, full of gifts, in the ground seeks he
 His agile body which the blaze had erst eaten,
 The leavings of fire collecteth together,
 270 With skill gathereth the bones that had crumbled
 In the fire's fury, and fetcheth together
 Early thereafter ashes and bones,
 The pyre's remnants, and with plants surroundeth
 The spoils of the slaughter² splendidly garnished.
 He is ready to look for his own land again, then,
 The leavings of fire with his feet seizeth,
 With his claws clutcheth, and his country one more
 His sun-bright seats, seeks joyfully
 His happy home. Wholly renewed, then,
 280 Are his life and his plumage, as at first he had them,
 When God all-glorious in the beginning placed him

Phoenix is himself again.

¹ This has sometimes been rendered as *mildew*; but, as that would not bring up pleasant associations, we adopt the conjectures of J. R. C. Hall, Bri., and others. The Latin has *ambrosios caelesti nectare rores*, which the A.-S. poet puts into one word. Probably 'nectar' is the word we need.

² *Wæl-reaf* (l. 273). BT. says '*exuvias suas*,' Gr. *Leichenraub*. J. R. C. Hall and Bri. say *spoil of the slain*.

In that noble region. His bones there, then,
Which the fire's fervor in flame on the barrow
Had eaten, brings he and the ashes together :
Then, the bones and the embers all on that island
The brave one burieth. Back to life cometh
The sun's symbol,¹ when the sheen heaven-torch,
The gladdest of gems, from the east shineth
290 Up o'er the ocean, orb preëminent.
Phoenix is in front fair to look upon,
His bosom embellished with a blending of colors :
On the back of his head, green and crimson ²
Blend together in beauty and harmony.
The tail of the bird is beautifully mingled,
Brown and purple, with splashes of brightness
Beauteously embellished. The bird's wings are
White at the tips, his neck green both
Above and beneath, and his neb glisteneth
300 Like glass or gem, his beak fair to look on
Within and without. His eyeball (?) ³ is strong,
In form and in shape a stone resembling,
A glittering jewel, when in golden vessel
By the craft of the smiths 'tis set cunningly.

The bird is described in detail.

¹ The clause **Bið . . . segn** [287(b)-288(a)] has long perplexed editors and translators. The MS. has **þegn**, retained by Grundtvig and Gr. If **bið him edniwe** be rendered *is himself again*, then the whole clause = *the thane of the sun is himself again* (when his lord, the sun, appears, etc.). Cf. l. 165, where the birds wished to be his thanes and servants; now he is the sun's thane. This exegesis enables us to keep close to the MS. Thorpe and Ett., however, suggest '**segn**,' which W. and Bri. adopt. Now, Tacitus and others speak of the Phoenix as "the symbol of the sun," and **þære sunnan segn** would exactly represent that epithet. Adopting this, the clause would read, "*The symbol of the sun is himself again*," etc., etc. Gr. in his *Dichtungen*, gave a very free translation.

² **Wurma** (l. 294) is variously glossed *purple, crimson, scarlet, purplish red*. Color words are very vague in A.-S.

³ It is not certain whether the whole ball of the eye or merely the pupil is meant. Gr.'s translation and lexicon differ; the latter takes the A.-S. word as an abstract noun = *nature-of-the-eye, power-of-sight*.

- His neck encircling, like the sun's halo,
 Is the brightest of rings woven of feathers.
 Beauteous his belly is, bright and gleaming,
 Marvellous sheen. The shield, above, on the
 Back of the Phoenix is joined with ornaments.
- 310 The legs of the bird are with scales covered,
 His fallow feet. The Phoenix is wholly
 Lovely to look on, likest the peacock
 Blooming in bliss, as the books tell us.
 The bird is not slow, sluggish of motion,
 Inert, indolent, like others of bird-kind
 Which on dull, numb wing move through the air :
 But he is quick and swift-going, exceeding agile,
 Beauteous and winsome, marked with glory :
 Eternal is the Prince who happiness giveth him !
- 320 Early thereafter, he his old haunts seeketh,
 From this land flieth, to that fair place hieth.
 As the bird soareth, is seen, then, of earthmen,
 Of folk not a few, far through middle-earth,
 They assemble themselves from southward and northward,
 From eastward and westward, eagerly thronging,
 Come from far and near in numberless multitudes,
 Where the Creator's gift they do all see, now,
 In the bird clearly, as the King of Victories
 In the beginning gave him a goodlier nature,
- 330 More excellent ornaments, than others of bird-kind.
 Then, men o'er the earth marvel and wonder
 At his beauty and form, and their books¹ tell us,
 On tablets of marble mark with their hands, too,
 When the day and the hour to earth folk showeth
 The swift-flier's ornaments. Myriads of birds, then,
 From far and near flock in multitudes,
 From all sides moving, in the air raise

Multitudes
 throng to see the
 great bird.

His coming is
 made a matter of
 record.

¹ Some read *gewritum* (l. 332) = *in books tell us*. We follow our text, based upon the MS.; the meaning is the same in both cases. The Egyptians, Romans, and others wrote no little of this wonderful bird.

Their pæan of praise, with puissant voices
 Laud the great hero, and wheeling in midair
 340 Encompass the holy one : in the midst, Phœnix
 Is surrounded by throngs. Races look on, now,
 Bewildered wonder how the willing retinue
 The wild bird worship, in wide multitudes
 Proclaim him lustily, and as king honor
 The liegelord belovèd, lead joyfully
 The atheling homeward, till the eminent hermit
 Swift-wingèd fleëth, till the throng of rejoicing ones
 No longer can follow him, when the pride of multitudes
 From this earth soareth, his own land seeking.

V.

350 So the blessèd Phœnix, his death-hour over,
 His dear old home once again seeketh,
 That land of delight ; lorn of mood, then,
 Back from the brave one do the birds turn them
 To their land once more, when the mighty atheling
 Young is at home. High God only
 Knoweth his nature,¹ omnipotent Ruler,
 Whether woman or man : this wot not any
 Of all men of earth but the Creator only,
 In how marvellous a manner he made this creature,
 360 How great the decree that gave him his being !
 There the blessèd bird may in bliss enjoy his
 Home and the currents that course through the forests,
 On that beauteous plain the bird may remain
 A thousand of winters : then, his life's end cometh ;
 The pile covers him through the blaze of the fire :
 Yet, wakened marvellously, he cometh to life
 Once more wondrously. So, when, wan and drooping,
 He death dreadeth not, its dire agony,

God alone
 knoweth the
 mystery of his
 birth.

¹ Some render 'sex,' but we follow Bri.

He does not fear
death, knowing
that he shall rise
again.

- 370 Who knoweth ever that renewal of life shall
The flame's fury follow assuredly,
Life after death, when in bird-form he riseth
Early thereafter from his ashes springing,
Reneweth his youth 'neath the shelter of heaven.
He is son and sire to himself, and is heir
Forever thereafter to his old inheritance.
The mighty Maker of Man granted him
To live so wondrously his life again over,
380 Covered with feathers, though the fire had swallowed him.¹

VI.

The Christian,
also, shall rise
from his ashes.

- So each saint seeketh, after sore tribulation,
Life everlasting 'mid the Lord God's chosen,
Through the darkness of death,² that, his days here over,
He the gracious gifts of God may enjoy in
Rapture unending, and forever and ever,
As a meed of his labors, live in glory.
This bird's nature may well be likened to
The elect servants of the dear Lord Jesus
390 Here under heaven, how, through the help of the Father,
They keep in this world their joy unfading
In these days of danger, and undying glory
In the celestial land lay up forever. —
The Almighty, we have heard, by his marvellous power
Made man and woman, and placed them in earth's
Choicest region, which the children of men
Paradise call, where no pleasure failed them
While they minded to keep the command of the Eternal,

The poet tells of
the fall of man.

¹ From this point the poet draws on his imagination and Christian symbolism.

² The A.-S. is *dark death*. On line 52, above, the phrase *the narrow death* is used. The great poet-laureate's words in *The Two Voices* may be paraphrased: No sound man that breathes with Anglo-Saxon breath hath ever truly longed for death.

- 400 The word of the Holy One, in their new delight.
 There the old-foe's envy injured them bitterly,
 The arch-fiend's enmity, who offered the tree's
 Fruit for food to them, that foolishly both of them
 Ate of the apple, angering God,
 Forbidden things tasted. There bitter grief to them
 Came from that eating, to their offspring proved it,
 To their sons and daughters, a sorrowful banquet :¹
 Their busy² teeth were bitterly punished
 For their guilt grievously ; they had God's anger,
 Bitter agony ; anguish suffered
- 410 Their offspring afterward for eating that morsel
 'Gainst God's command. So, mournful in spirit,
 Their delightsome home they must leave, abandon,
 Through the serpent's hatred, when in days ago
 He our grandparents beguiled artfully,
 With treachery foul, so that far away thenceward
 They sought a sojourn in that sorrowful death-vale,
 Dismaler dwellings. The dear life of rapture
 Was hidden in darkness, and the holy places
 Were shut fast in their faces, through the foeman's cunning
- 420 Many weary winters, till the Wielder of Glory,³
 The Joy of Mankind,³ by his coming hither
 Again opened them, Comfort of the Weary³
 And the Only Hope,³ to all his holy ones.

Like a faithful
 homilist, he tells
 of the Only Hope
 for sinful men.

VII.

And most like this, as men of learning
 In words do tell us and writings inform us, ✓

¹ **Symbol** (l. 406) was rendered as an adv. by Gr. in his translation. BT., Br., and others treat it as a noun = *banquet*.

² **Idge** (l. 407) is not understood. We follow BT. — For a helpful note, see Bri., p. 228.

³ These parallelisms are a regular feature of A.-S. poetry, though we do not often have as many as four together. Of course these refer to Christ.

As this agèd bird
leaves his home,
and goes to an-
other land to find
new life,

430

Is this bird's journey, when agèd he leaveth
His own land and country and old is waxen,
Departeth sorrowful oppressed with winters,
Where the grove's shelter lofty he findeth,
And therein buildeth, of herbs and branches
Noblest that are known, a new place of dwelling,
A nest in the grove : he greatly desireth
That young once more he again may receive through
The fire's burning life after death,
May renew his youth and his old haunts visit,
His sun-bright seats set out to look for,
When his fire-bath is finished. So our first parents,

so our first
parents had to
leave theirs in
Paradise, and
seek a home
among enemies.

440

Our elders of old, gave up, abandoned
The land of delight, and left behind them
Their dwelling of glory, went a long journey
Into hostile ones' hands, where hateful ones often,
Accursèd creatures, cruelly harassed them.
There were many, nathless, who with holy practices
Heeded under heaven the behests of the Father,
With glorious deeds, so that God smiled on them,
Great King of Heaven, with gracious approval.

The faithful
Christian is
building his nest
in a high tree.

450

The high tree is this that the holy saints now
Have their pure homes in, where hateful ones nowise
Are able with poison to injure his people,
With token of treachery, in that time of great peril,
Where by deeds illustrious the Lord's good warrior
His nest fashioneth 'gainst every oppression,
When alms giveth he to the poor and the needy,
To all wretched ones, and for aid on the Lord God,
On the Father calleth, forth hasteneth,
Atones the offences of this fleeting existence,
Its deeds of darkness, and the dear law of God
Holds firm in his bosom, his prayers seeketh¹
With pure, clean thoughts, and his knees oft bendeth

¹ We follow BT. and Bri. — Gr. has almost the same translation: (*er*) *Zum Gebet sich wendet.*

- 460 Noble to earth, all ill deeds fleëth,
 All foul offences, for the fear of the Lord God,
 Strives eagerly to do the most of
 Good deeds and gracious : God shieldeth him
 In all of his ways, Wielder of Victories,
 Lord God of Hosts. These are the herbs, then,
 The blooms of the plants, which the blessed Phoenix
 From far and wide doth fetch under heaven,
 Brings to his bidding-place, where he buildeth his nest soon
 All fast and firm 'gainst foemen's oppressions.
- 470 So the heroes of heaven his behests follow
 With mood and with might in their mortal dwellings,
 Fame-deeds perform : the Father almighty will
 Assuredly give them blessed requital.
 From these herbs, dwellings shall hereafter be built them
 In the city of glory, their good works rewarding,
 Seeing they held to his holy commandments,
 And love the dear Lord with unlagging ardor
 By day and by night, fervent in spirit,
 With faith luminous the Belovèd One choosing
- 480 'Bove the wealth of this world : they ween not of happiness
 By long living this life so fleeting.
 Thus, the blessed man doth bliss eternal,
 A home in the heavens, with the High-King eminent
 Earn valiantly, till the end cometh of
 His measure of days, when death off-taketh
 Each one from life-joys, eager-toothed warrior
 Armed with his weapons,¹ and to earth's embraces
 Speedily pusheth the perishing bodies
 From their souls sundered, where, 'neath the sod mouldering,
- 490 They shall long remain till the last fire cometh.
 To the Great Meeting² shall many be led, then,

His good deeds
 are the pleasant
 herbs with which
 he encompasseth
 himself.

¹ Literally, *The warrior greedy for slaughter (and) armed with weapons.*
 This is thoroughly characteristic.

² The gathering of the nations at the Day of Judgment is conceived as a
 great **Gemot**, summoned by the Great King.

The Day of Judgment.

Of the race of mortals : the Father of Angels,
 Very-King of Victories, shall convene an assembly,¹
 Lord God of Hosts, shall judge in righteousness.
 All men of earth out from the grave, then,
 Shall come once more, as the King almighty,
 The Angel-Prince, summons them o'er sea and o'er land,
 Saviour of men, at the sound of the trumpet :
 500 Then, death the dark is done for the blessed
 By the might of the Lord God : the noble ones come
 In multitudes pressing, when this present world,
 Sinful and guilty, is consumed in shame,
 Eaten in flame. Each one waxeth, now,
 Frantic with fear, when the fire swalloweth
 His fleeting possessions, the flame ravenously
 Devours earth's riches, the embossed gold-work
 Eagerly graspeth, greedily swallows
 All the land's ornaments. At that open hour, then,
 510 This bird's token,² beautiful and joyous,
 Is plain to the eyes of all humanity,
 When the might of the Lord all things restoreth,
 From burial-barrows the bones gathereth,
 The body and members and the guest of the fire³
 At Christ's footstool : the King gloriously
 From his high seat in heaven on his holy ones shineth,⁴
 Grand Glory-Gem. Good for the man who
 At that sorrowful season is received of the Father !

¹ See footnote 2, p. 35.

² This means: *The symbolical character of the bird . . . is manifest to all men, etc.* **Tacen** (l. 510) is a popular word in the homiletic literature, and is used in this poem frequently.

³ We follow the G.-W. text, and the translations of Thorpe and Gollancz. Other readings are : (1) *life's guest*; (2) *life's spirit*; (3) *the flame's spirit*.

⁴ This idea is repeated in ll. 590-591, below.

VIII.

There the bodies of saints from sins set free, then,
 Speed joyfully, spirits return to
 520 Their caskets of clay, when climbeth the fire
 High to the heavens. Hot is for many
 That fearful fire, when, affrighted, trembling,
 Each soul of earthmen reënters its body,
 Both of saint and of sinner, ascendeth the tomb
 To the Judge's doom. The fire rageth
 Burneth wickedness. There the blest redeemed ones,
 Their agonies over, shine out in their good works,
 In their own actions : such the excellent plants,
 The herbs a-winsome, that the wild bird Phoenix
 530 On every side encircles his nest with,
 So that quickly ablaze it burneth, flameth
 'Neath the sun suddenly and himself therewith,
 And, the flame-burning over, he receiveth his life back
 Anew and afresh, then. In robes of flesh, then,
 Are all men reclad, most comely, youthful,
 Who of their own will here bring it to pass that
 The great Glory-King granteth them mercy
 At the solemn assembly. Then, sanctified spirits,
 540 The souls of the saints, sing in unison,
 Lift up their voices, elect, holy ones,
 In choruses chant the King's praises,
 Go up to glory gleaming in beauty, and
 With good deeds fragrant. Refined from dross, then,
 Are the souls of men, made sweet and pure¹
 Through the purging of fire. — Let no one believe,² now,
 Of all men on earth that *I* am fashioning
 With words that are lying this lay of the Phoenix,

The Resurrec-
 tion.

Blessèd are the
 dead that die in
 the Lord.

¹ Other readings are : *brightly adorned ; glänzend geklärt*. Ours is a free translation, but rests upon high authority. — The poet believes in purgatory, and refers to it naturally.

² The poet here strikes a personal, subjective strain.

[I am not utter-
ing poetical rhapsodies, but am
following Job, an
inspired singer.]

- Am writing rhapsodies ! you may read the prophecy,
 550 The songs¹ of Job ! Stirred in his bosom,
 Inspired by the Spirit, spake he out boldly,
 Adorned with honor, he uttered this word :
 " In the deeps of my bosom, I disdain not the thought
 That I shall choose in my nest my death-bed, and thenceward,
 Mood-weary man mournful depart on
 My long journey from past deeds unhappy,
 Covered with clay, to the clasp of the earth, and,
 My death-day done, through the dear Lord's goodness,
 Like the great bird Phoenix, shall find once more
 On rising again renewal of life-joys,
 560 Bliss with the Lord, where the belovèd throng do
 Praise the dear Father. I can never attain to
 The limit of life through the long ages
 Of brightness, blissfulness : though my body must moulder
 In the grave's gloom-vaults for glee unto worms,
 Yet the Lord God of Hosts, after the horrible death-hour,
 Shall my soul deliver and awake it to glory.
 A firm hope and faith ne'er fails in my bosom,
 Of perpetual joy in the Prince of the Angels."²
 570 Thus sang a seer in cycles of old,
 Spake sagaciously, God's messenger,
 Of his rising again unto life eternal,
 That we, in this era, might well conceive the
 Glorious token that the great bird Phoenix
 Through his burning brings us : the bones' fragments,
 The ashes and embers all he collecteth,
 When the fire is finished, in his feet, thereafter,
 The bird bringeth them to the abode of the Lord God,
 Out tow'rd the sun, where he afterward liveth
 580 Years numberless, renewed in form and

As the noble bird
gathers up his
ashes and bones,
and seeks the
presence and
society of his
god, the sun,

¹ *Utterances, prophecies*, some render. We follow BT.

² The poet paraphrases Job xxix. 18 and xix. 25, 26, 27, except that, in the former passage, he reads "Phoenix" where the K. J. Bible has "sand." See Bri., p. 228.

Wholly young again, where 'mong all that people
 Not any can ever with ills threaten him.
 So, now, after death, by the dear Lord's power,
 Souls with their bodies journey together,
 Like the blessèd bird beauteously decked with
 Excellent odors, in eminent rapture,
 Where the faithful sun flashes in beauty
 O'er hosts of the happy in the heavenly city.

so, after the resurrection, the souls of the just, purified as by fire, seek the presence and fellowship of God.

IX.

590 There, high through the heavens, the holy Saviour
 Brightly beameth o'er blessèd spirits,
 Beautiful birds in bliss exulting
 Restored gloriously gladly follow him
 In that land of light, elect spirits,
 Forever and ever, where with evil and treachery
 No false and impious foeman can harm them :
 But they live there for aye in light apparelled,
 Like the great bird Phoenix 'neath God's protection,
 Grandly in glory. The good work of each of them
 Brightly beameth in the blissful home
 600 In the everlasting Lord's beloved presence,
 In peace alway, like the light of the sun where
 The glittering garland,¹ from glistening jewels
 Wondrously woven, is worn on the head of
 Each of the happy ones. Their heads shine, then,
 Covered with glory ; the crown of the Lord
 Excellent adorns each of the faithful
 With lustre in the life where the long rapture
 Endless and perennial not e'er diminisheth,
 But they in beauty abide abundant in glory,
 610 With the Father of Angels in ornaments fair.
 They shall know in that land naught sorrowful,

After the Judgment, Christ flies through the air followed by rejoicing spirits.

The good deeds of the righteous shine brightly forever.

The Joys of the Blest.

¹ *Crown* would be more conventional; but, for the sake of alliteration, we follow BT.

Nor harm nor want nor days of contention,
 Nor hunger the hot nor horrible thirst,
 Nor age nor penury : the excellent King to them
 All good things giveth, where the great throng of spirits
 Laud their Saviour and the heavenly King's
 Greatness glorify, to God singing praises.
 The peaceful throng, 'round the throne of the Father
 Holy in heaven wake harmonies mighty,
 Clear-sounding choruses ; in common with angels,
 620 The blissful ones blithely bless the excellent
 Wielder of Worlds, with one voice crying :
 " Peace to thee, true God, and perfect wisdom,
 And thanks be to thee enthronèd in glory
 For every new gift and all of thy bounty,
 Immense, measureless is thy might and thy power,
 High and holy ! The heaven of heavens,
 Father almighty, is filled beauteously,
 Splendor of splendors, with thy spacious glory
 Up 'mid the angels and on earth together !
 630 Protect us, thou Author of all things ! thou art almighty Father
 God in the highest, Guardian of Heaven ! "
 Thus say the righteous ransomed from sin in
 The city of glory, sing of his majesty ;
 The host of the happy in heaven e'er raise
 The Emperor's¹ praise : " Endless worship
 Is his only forever ; he not e'er had beginning,
 Commencement of might ! though, 'mong men in the earth
 here,
 In the form of a child he was born and nurtured,
 640 As man on this midearth, yet his mighty power
 High o'er the heavens holy continued,
 Undiminished his majesty ! though mortal agony,
 Torment and torture, on the tree of shame

The Song of the
Redeemed.

¹ The poet conceives of God as the divine Cæsar, or Kaiser. — In reading, we must project ourselves back into this early period when these words were not hackneyed by centuries of use, but were still filled with *august* meaning.

He was doomed to endure, he the third day following
 The fall of his body¹ rose from the dead again
 Through the help of the Father. So Phoenix betokeneth,
 Young in the world, the God-Son's power,
 When up from his ashes uninjured in form he
 650 Leaps into life again. So our Lord and Saviour
 Through the fall of his body afforded us help,
 Life everlasting, as the lofty bird his
 Wings filleth full of fragrant, winsome
 Herbs of the forest, when eager for flying,
 Earth-fruits delicious." Such are the words, then,
 The songs of the saints (as sacred books² tell us)
 Whose holy spirits aspire unto heaven,
 In the joy of all joys, to the gentle World-Father,
 Where to God for a gift the goodly fragrance
 Of words and of works³ they willingly offer,
 660 To the great Creator, in the glorious creation,
 The life of light. Laud him forever,
 World without end, give him honor and glory,
 Majesty, dominion, in the mighty, celestial
 Kingdom of heaven! He is rightly Sov'ran
 Of the whole of the earth and all of the heavens,
 Encircled with glory in the city of beauty.
 The Creator of Light hath to us granted
 To earn on the earth here his unending raptures,
 By good deeds to gain glory in heaven,
 670 Where we men are permitted the mightiest kingdoms
 To seek and to hold, on seats alofty
 Live in the delights of life and of peace,
 To hold the homes of happy blessedness,
 Have pleasures perpetual, see the peaceful, merciful

Even in heaven
 the noble bird is
 glorified as a type
 of the risen
 Christ.

The poet himself
 praises God.

¹ We follow BT.

² Such men as Bede, St. Ambrose, and other allegorical writers of the church.

³ See Bible concordance under "savour," especially "sweet-smelling savour." Also cf. "the odor of sanctity."

Lord of Victories, look on him alway
 And his songs of praise unceasingly raise,
 Blessèd 'mid angels. Alleluia !

[The last eleven lines of the poem are part Latin and part Anglo-Saxon, which we have tried to represent below by leaving the Latin. Stopford Brooke suggests that possibly Cynewulf may have chosen to end the poem in this "fantastic way," instead of signing with runes as in some others.¹]

Hath allowed us graciously *lucis auctor*,
 In this mortal life *mereri*²
 By deeds of goodness *gaudia in celo*,
 Where we men are permitted *maxima regna*
 To seek and possess, *sedibus altis*
 To live in the delights *lucis et pacis*,
 Earn the abodes *almæ*³ *letitiæ*,
 Have abundant blessings, *blandem et mitem*,
 Victory-Lord see *sine fine*,
 And laud him loudly *laude perenne*,
 Happy with angels. Alleluia.

¹ With all deference to this eminent scholar, I do not see the remotest connection between this way of ending a poem and Cynewulf's runic insertions, unless it should turn out that he has hidden his signature somehow, à la Donnelly, in the Latin.

² Some read *merueri*; one emendator, *meruisse*; another, *merere*.

³ Some read *alma*.