

CHAPTER II.

Before 600.—*Early English Poems.*—*The Venerable Bede,*
673.—*The Reign of Edgar,* **958-75.**—*The Battle of Has-*
tings, **1066.**

7. **Judith**, a paraphrase of the Scripture story, is the next important poem after *Beowulf*. Mr. Sweet, a great authority on Anglo-Saxon poetry, says that this poet surpasses both Cædmon and Cynewulf in constructive skill and in command of his foreign subject, and that he is not inferior to them "in command of language and metre." The author of *Judith* and the date of its composition are unknown. Only about a quarter of the poem has been preserved. The three cantos, however, are very effective. The author throws himself into the spirit of the conflict between the Hebrews and the Assyrians. *Judith* has none of the sympathetic touches which make *Beowulf* seem closer to humanity; it is a poem of blood and war. The descriptions of the banquet of Holofernes, of the fear of the Assyrian courtiers who do not dare to wake their king, and of the return of Judith triumphant, are grandly done. The picture of the battle between the Hebrews and the Assyrians is very graphic: