

guage written in the year 700 is the same as that in which the prose of the Bible is written, just as much as the tree planted a hundred years ago is the same tree to-day. It is this sameness of language, as well as the sameness of national spirit, which makes our literature one literature for 1200 years.

4. **Of English Literature written in this tongue** we have no extant prose until the time of King Ælfred. Men like Bæda and Ealdhelm wrote their prose in Latin. But we have, in a few manuscripts, a great deal of poetry written in English, chiefly before the days of Ælfred. There is (1) the MS. under the name of *Cædmon's Paraphrase*, a collection of religious poems by various writers, now in the Bodleian. There is (2) the MS. of *Beowulf* and of the last three books of *Judith*. There is (3) the *Exeter Book*, a miscellaneous collection of poems, left by Leofric, Bishop of Exeter, to his cathedral church in the year 1071. There is (4) the *Vercelli Book*, discovered at Vercelli in the year 1822, in which, along with homilies, there is a collection of six poems. A few leaflets complete the list of the MSS. containing poems earlier than Ælfred. All together they constitute a vernacular poetry which consists of more than twenty thousand lines.

5. **The metre of the poems** is essentially the same, unlike any modern metre, without rhyme, and without any fixed number of syllables. Its essential elements were accent and alliteration. Every verse is divided into two half-verses by a pause, and has four accented syllables,