

find most traces of early English paganism are the so-called *Charms*.

8. *Beowulf* is our old English epic, and it recounts the great deeds and death of Beowulf. It may have arisen before the English conquest of Britain in the shape of short songs about the hero, and we can trace, perhaps, three different centres for the story. The scenery is laid among the Danes in Seeland and among the Geats in South Sweden, on the coast of the North Sea and the Kattegat. There is not a word about our England in the poem. Coming to England in the form of short poems, it was wrought together into a complete tale of two parts, the first of which we may again divide into two; and was afterwards edited, with a few Christian applications, and probably by a Northumbrian poet, in the eighth century. In this form we possess it.

The story is of Hrothgar, one of the kingly race of Jutland, who builds his hall, Heorot, near the sea, on the edge of the moorland. A monster called Grendel, half-human, half-fiend, dwells in a sea-cave, near the moor over which he wanders by night, and hating the festive noise, carries off thirty or the thegns of Hrothgar and devours them. He then haunts the hall at night, and after twelve years of this distress, Beowulf, thegn of Hygelac, sails from Sweden to bring help to Hrothgar, and at night, when Grendel breaks into the hall, wrestles with him, tears away his arm, and the fiend flies away to die. The second division of the first part of the poem begins with the vengeance taken by Grendel's