

10. **Cædmon.** — The poem of *Beowulf* has the grave Teutonic power, but it is not, as a whole, native to our soil. It is not the first true English poem. That is the work of CÆDMON, and it was done in Northumbria. The story of it, as told by Bæda, proves that the making of songs was common at the time. Cædmon was a servant to the monastery of Hild, an abbess of royal blood, at Whitby in Yorkshire. He was somewhat aged when the gift of song came to him, and he knew nothing of the art of verse, so that at the feasts when for the sake of mirth all sang in turn he left the table. One evening, having done so and gone to the stables, for he had the care of the cattle that night, he fell asleep, and One came to him in vision and said, "Cædmon, sing me some song." And he answered, "I cannot sing; for this cause I left the feast and came hither." Then said the other, "However, you shall sing." "What shall I sing?" he replied. "Sing the beginning of created things," answered the other. Whereupon he began to sing verses to the praise of God, and, awaking, remembered what he had sung, and added more in verse worthy of God. In the morning he came to the town-reeve, and told him of the gift he had received, and, being brought to Hild, was ordered to tell his dream before learned men, that they might give judgment whence his verses came. And when they had heard, they all said that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by our Lord. This story ought to be loved by us, for it tells of the beginning in England of the wonderful life of English Poetry. Nor should we