

The Danes retired into East Anglia, and a few days after Guthorm and several of his nobles again met Alfred at Wedmore, when the Danish leader was baptized.—Alfred standing sponsor for him. At this time the details of the treaty were arranged, and Guthorm returned to East Anglia to rule his people in their new character of tillers of the soil. But although Alfred had thus obtained a decided superiority over the Danes, they did not remain perfectly faithful to their compact. In after years, they more than once violated the treaty, particularly in 885, when they joined a party of Northmen in an attack on Kent. But Alfred always vanquished them in the end. He lived to see his plans for the promotion of peace, civilization and Christianity in their midst carried out with success, until at last the distinction between Dane and Saxon vanished in the common name of Englishmen.

With the treaty of Wedmore begins the peaceful part of Alfred's life. It was indeed interrupted, as we have just seen, and shall see again; but for many years he was enabled to employ his powers in labors more congenial to his spirit than those of war. Having saved his country from foreign foes, his next thought was to guard it from the assaults of internal enemies; to render every man's life and property secure. To attain this end he spared no pains, and in his efforts for its accomplishment was daunted by no difficulty, for he well knew that until it was effected all other efforts to benefit his people would be made in vain. To bring all men under the control of the law he determined to make every man in the country an instrument for its enforcement. With this object he readjusted the boundaries of the counties, dividing them into hundreds, and these into tythings, or bodies of ten families, each having its ruling officer. Whenever any breach of the law occurred, the tything in which it had taken place was required to produce the offender. If he could not be found within its limits, search was made for strangers in the adjoining tythings. The law required that travellers on leaving their own district should receive a letter similar to the modern passport, and on search being made for criminals they were

required to produce it on pain of being assumed to be guilty unless they could prove their innocence. But if, after all, the offender failed to be discovered, the penalty attached to his crime was assessed on the tything where the offence had been committed. By this means, every Englishman was, in some measure, made guardian of the public peace, and the strongest security possible taken for its maintenance. The system may seem harsh, and even tyrannical, to the eyes of the nineteenth century, but there can be no doubt that it was an enormous blessing to the eighth. Then every man had been accustomed to do that which was right in his own eyes, and pagan Dane and Christian Saxon thought they were doing a meritorious act in slaying unbelievers. That the law was efficacious is certain; indeed, it is said that Alfred used to hang gold chains at the cross-roads which no robber would dare to touch. This story may not be strictly correct, but the fact of such a statement being made goes a long way to prove that he must have succeeded in securing for his people that internal peace which is the cornerstone of civilization.

The supremacy of the law is of first-rate importance to every community. But second only to their supremacy is the character of the laws which are supreme. To the improvement of the law Alfred devoted himself with an energy rarely seen, even in more enlightened times. The whole of the Saxon laws he condensed into a code which was submitted to the Witenagemote, and by it adopted. His great desire seems to have been to infuse Christian principles into the old national laws, derived from Pagan ancestors. So strongly did this desire exist, that he frequently even took these principles as a fresh foundation. His Code opened with the Decalogue, omitting the second commandment, but inserting the 23rd verse of the chapter in its stead. Then followed those Mosaic laws treating of the relations of masters and servants; the punishment for murder, homicide, theft, and other kindred crimes, with the rules for the observance of holy-days. Alfred then goes on to say that these laws were delivered to Moses by the Almighty God; that afterwards our Lord