

to save Canterbury from pillage. This is about all we read of Ceolnoth, who left more stamp upon his coins than upon his age. In fact, England seems to have suffered for sixty years or more for lack of a vigorous ecclesiastical head. In learning, it had gone back to an alarming extent; for at this very time Alfred, then but a youth, was complaining that he could not find a master to teach him Latin! No doubt the unsettled state of the country caused by foreign invasion had much to do with this deplorable state of things. It was a time of great disorder all over the world, and from it Ceolnoth, in 870, was quietly removed by death.

Ethelred succeeded him. In his term of office we hear for the first time of the "Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals" at Rome—a new code of ecclesiastical laws emanating from France, which, till the time of the Reformation (when they were proved to be forgeries), exercised tremendous influence upon the affairs of the whole of Western Christendom. The tendency of these false decrees was to exalt the papacy, which henceforth grew to an alarming extent. But the great events of the outside world were as nothing to Ethelred compared with the many troubles he found at home owing to the repeated attacks of the Danes, who imitated wild beasts in their ferocity and cruelty. Homes, parishes, churches, monasteries were destroyed, organizations were broken up, and monks and clergy dispersed. Canterbury, twice sacked, was almost deserted. In the midst of all this disorder the youthful Alfred came to the throne, and was at once plunged into wars and struggles for very life. His courage and perseverance at last saved his country, when, at Ethandune, he gained a great victory over the Danes, and brought them in humble submission to his feet.

This great man, who is described as having the virtues of an Antoninus, the learning of a Socrates, the valor of a Cæsar, the legislative ability of a Lycurgus, now showed that he had the missionary spirit of an apostle, for his conditions of peace and mercy were that the conquered people at his feet should become Christians, and dwell among the Anglo-Saxons as one race. Their leader and a large number of them gladly embraced these unlooked-for terms. The archbishop superintended the necessary instruction; baptism was administered to them in large numbers, and the Anglo-Danes were incorporated into the English nation, destined to become far-spreading and great. Ethelred also gladly received Alfred's laws, which were based throughout upon Christian principles, and some of which were the actual foundation of the present system of public school education in England.

On Ethelred's death in 889, Plegmund, a personal friend of Alfred the Great, was appointed to the archbishopric, it having been first declined by Grimbald, a monk of St. Bertin, in

France. When the Danes were devastating England, some young men banded themselves together to live in caves and holes in the earth, and pray for God's protection, and teach the people whenever opportunity might offer. Plegmund was one of those hermits, as they were called, and when he was made archbishop there was great rejoicing in England. To him, in 903, belonged the melancholy duty of closing the eyes of Alfred the Great, to whom the England of every age subsequent to him has owed a deep debt of gratitude. On his death the Danes again began their depredations, and this greatly embittered the closing days of Plegmund. He died in 914.

On his death King Edward the Elder nominated Athelm, bishop of Wells, to the archbishopric. The chapter elected him, and the people approved. Such was the method of electing an archbishop in those days. Owing to troublesome times again revisiting the land, the work of the Church was much interrupted, but we hear little of Athelm's doings. He died in 923. Wulfhelm, who had succeeded him at Wells, succeeded him also at Canterbury. One of his first duties was to officiate at the coronation of King Athelstan, which is described as a very gorgeous affair. The Saxon kings held their court, not in a city or town, but wherever they might set up their camp. The towns were for trades people; the rude camp, pitched in some very small place or even in the country, was the king's court. The form of consecration used to-day is much the same as that used in the presence of Archbishop Wulfhelm when King Athelstan received the blessing at his hands. The archbishop visited Rome in 927, and found the papal chair occupied by an ecclesiastic who was as well a statesman, a warrior, and also a man of irreligious and ever profligate life, which was doubtless a great shock to the simple-minded Englishman. On his return to England, he and King Athelstan drew up some ecclesiastical laws to prevent, if possible, the irregularities which he saw at Rome penetrating into England. These are known as King Athelstan's laws ecclesiastical. He revived the giving of the tithes for the support of the clergy, but some of his laws were very silly and cruel, such as those relating to trial by ordeal. Of these ordeals there were several—one was that of cold water. The accused was loaded with weights and thrown into water. If he sank, he was declared guilty! Such unjust practices lingered in England until comparatively recent dates; and it even extended to this country within the memory of persons still living.

The manners and customs of the English people at this time were somewhat crude and rough. Their houses, even in the towns, as a rule, were merely thatched huts, with a wooden