

He led his men into Somerset, where there was a piece of land called the Isle of Athelney. This island had very wet marshes all round it and made a good hiding-place. Alfred made up his mind to stay here with his army until he was ready once more to fight against the Danes.

One day, it is said, Alfred was wandering about the country side when he came to the cottage of a cowherd whom he knew. The king was dressed like any other country-man, and he was both tired and hungry. The cowherd was not at home, but his wife let the king come near the fire to warm himself. She knew he was one of her husband's friends, but had no idea who he really was.

The king sat down near the hearth, upon which some cakes were baking. The wife of the cowherd, who was busy about the house, told him to watch the cakes and see that they did not burn.

Alfred sat mending his bow, and his mind was busy thinking of the sad state of his unhappy country. This made him forget the cakes, and before long they began to burn.

The woman turned and saw what was wrong. She was very angry, and rushed forward to the