

there for some time besieged. The place was strong, the winter at hand, and the time of the soldiers' service nearly expired. A treaty was accordingly made by which the Danes were allowed to depart unharmed to the north side of the Humber, and the West Saxons returned to their kingdom.

"Such is the situation at present, but we may be sure that the Danes will not long remain quiet, but will soon gather for another invasion; ere long, too, we may expect another of their great fleets to arrive somewhere off these coasts, and every Saxon who can bear arms had need take the field to fight for our country and faith against these heathen invaders. Hitherto, Edmund, as you know, I have deeply mourned the death of your mother, and of your sisters who died in infancy; but now I feel that it is for the best, for a terrible time is before us. We men can take refuge in swamp and forest, but it would have been hard for delicate women; and those men are best off who stand alone and are able to give every thought and energy to the defence of their country. 'Tis well that you are now approaching an age when the Saxon youth are wont to take their place in the ranks of battle. I have spared no pains with your training in arms, and though assuredly you lack strength yet to cope in hand-to-hand conflict with these fierce Danes, you may yet take your part in battle, with me on one