

places of pagan worship, partly, probably, moved thereto by considerations of convenience, partly, perhaps, in outward and visible sign of victory, but also with the idea of sanctifying, by a purer worship, the scenes of idolatrous superstition. If mediæval tradition, however, is to be believed, the Saint himself to whom the new church was about to be dedicated, signified his approbation personally. Before the ceremony was to take place, a fisherman was met by a stranger on the banks of the Thames, and requested to ferry him over to the Isle of Thorney, and there await his return. Accompanied by a host of angels, the mysterious passenger entered the new church, and consecrated it by the light of a supernatural radiance, which filled the walls. He then announced himself to the awestruck fisherman as the Apostle Peter, and told him to go and tell the bishop that the church was already consecrated. He further added a command to cast his net into the river, and to convey one of the fish so caught to the bishop, assuring him that he should never want fish so long as he gave one-tenth to the Church. A miraculous draught was the consequence, and the bishop, on making an examination, found proof of the truth of the fisherman's story, in the marks of the extinguished tapers, and of the chrism. It was on the ground of this grant of the Apostle, that the Convent of St. Peter, Westminster, claimed and received a tenth of the salmon caught in the river, and, although the salmon caught about Westminster bridge in these days, are shadowy as a dream, yet the Thames and the brooks, and the small rivers that then flowed into it were full of fish in the olden times. Centuries after we find the 'prentice-boys stipulating in their indentures that they shall not be required to eat salmon more than thrice a week. Thus, at almost the same period, rose the two grand national cathedrals, St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey.

We have little notice of London in the early Saxon period; later on, indeed, it is more frequently mentioned, but chiefly in connection with the Danish incursions, from which the Londoners, as well

as the rest of the country, suffered considerably. The ominous black raven continually hovered round about the city gates, and in 839 effected a lodgment within the walls, and London was pillaged and burnt. It was soon after restored by Alfred the Great, who raised two fortifications on either side of the river Lea, and, by means of canals, so drained the water as to considerably lower the level of the stream, and impede the navigation for the Danes. Yet such was the perseverance of those marauders, and so effectually did they harass the country, that we find Alfred compelled one summer to encamp around the harvest men, who were reaping corn round the city, in order to protect them from the daring freebooters. Yet, even in those days, the Londoners, despite their pacific pursuits, were a martial people, and the trainbands of the civil wars, and the volunteers of our own times, found worthy representatives amongst the Saxons. The bravery of the London soldiery in a battle fought at Brunenburgh, against the Scots and Danes, is much extolled, and the result was probably the origin of the renewed prosperity which visited the city under Athelstane. As a proof of its rising importance we find that by a law of that King, which appointed coiners to the principal cities, eight were allowed to London, a larger number than was allotted to any other place except Canterbury. But plague and fire, the latter of no unfrequent recurrence, visited the metropolis in 961, and after that there were but few houses, and those irregularly placed within the city walls, the majority of the population residing near Ludgate.

In the contest which soon after ensued, the Londoners, though at first compelled to submit to Sweyn, threw off his yoke, and elevating Edmund Ironside to the throne, had him crowned in their own city, the first of the long line of princes whose coronation has taken place at Westminster. Canute, however, was a sore trouble to them. In 1016, the *Saxon Chronicle* says, "came the ships to Greenwich on Rogation days, and within a little space they went to London, and they dug a great ditch on the south side, and dragged their