

most powerful kings, as well as the best, that lived at that time. While he reigned in England, which was nineteen years, there was peace; and in that time the people improved very much. They built better houses, and wore better clothes, and ate better food. Besides, they had more schools, and were much better brought up. Canute was very kind to learned men, and encouraged the English in everything good and useful.

I am sorry to say, however, that they still had many slaves, instead of servants to wait upon them, and to help to till the ground for them.

By slaves, I mean men and women who are called the property of others, who buy and sell them, as they would horses.

Formerly there were white slaves in almost every country: afterwards, when white slaves were not allowed by law, people went and stole black men, from their own homes and families, and carried them to places so far from their homes, that they could never get back again, and made them work for them. And it is very lately that a law has been made that there shall be no more slavery.

The reason I tell you about slavery in this place is, that the Danes had a great many English slaves, and the rich English had a great many Britons, and even poor English, for their slaves; for although the Danes and English loved to be free themselves, they thought there was no harm in making slaves of the prisoners they took in battle, or even of the poor people of their own country, whom they forced to sell themselves or their children for slaves, before they would give them clothes or food to keep them from starving. By degrees, however, these wicked customs were left off, and now we are all free.