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KING ALFRED IN LITERATURE.

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES
OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY,

BY

LOUIS WARDLAW MILES.



BALTIMORE:
JOHN MURPHY COMPANY.

1902.

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INTRODUCTION.

The present investigation is an attempt to trace the growth of the figure and character of Alfred as it appears in literature. Although the primary object has been to observe the treatment of Alfred in fiction, it is obvious that it is desirable first to summarize the historical and legendary conceptions from which the writers of fiction have obtained their material. For this purpose the first section is devoted to the Alfred of History and contains a synopsis of the accounts furnished by the contemporary evidence of Asser and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and of the additions made by succeeding medieval writers considered in chronological order. Finally under the head of Biography are noted the editions of Asser, and the modern Lives of Alfred.

In section two are examined all the works of fiction which the writer has been able to discover based upon the story of Alfred. The number of these will probably be a surprise to most readers. That their general average of merit is low is too obvious to need comment. Yet it is hoped that it may be interesting to observe in them the continued growth of a feeling which has from early times regarded Alfred as a national hero. Moreover these works exhibit in a striking manner the slowly increasing general interest in early English history, and the improving conceptions of its real conditions.

A number of incidental references in works which are not exclusively devoted to Alfred is collected under General Mention. Here also are considered a few shorter poems which seem more advantageously so noticed than among the longer works.

Finally, in the Conclusion is attempted a review of the already noticed conceptions of Alfred from the earliest to the present times. In these conceptions two principal, and for the most part contradictory, influences are at work. First, the tendency, which is also

the more extended, to *Verherrlichung* which has ascribed various acts to Alfred, in the character of a national hero, with which he was unconnected. Second, the depreciation of his character which begins in the Lives of St. Neot in order to exalt that saint by contrast; limited as this influence has been, it has left its impress on more than one work of modern fiction. For the most part, however, the fiction concerned with Alfred has continued to lay stress on the patriotic side of his story. The fact that 'Rule Britannia' was written for Thomson and Mallet's Masque is an index of the patriotic popular conceptions which have been most prominently associated with Alfred's name. Whatever works have achieved greatest success have been those which through the sentiments they expressed, or through their timely appearance at a period of patriotic enthusiasm have most successfully touched this note. Just why no great poem should ever have been founded upon this patriotic subject opens the question of poetic material in an interesting manner.

Three recent works require mention here as they contain certain features of the present investigation. 'Alfred the Great, A Sketch and Seven Studies,' by Warwick H. Draper,¹ under the head of "Materials for the History of Alfred" gives in chronological order a summary of the accounts of the chronicles of medieval times, and of later biographies. There is also a bibliography which ends with the "Poetical Works on Alfred," ten of which are recorded.² 'The Life and Times of Alfred the Great,' by Charles Plummer,³ also gives an excellent account of Asser and the later chronicles in the discussion of "The Sources," to which the first two lectures are devoted. Finally 'King Alfred in English Poetry,'⁴ a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Leipzig, by J. Loring Arnold deserves particular regard. An "Introduction" gives a good account of the medieval chronicles. Under "Modern Alfred-Poetry" four works are summarized and

¹ With a Preface by the Bishop of Hereford. (London, Elliott Stock, 1901.)

² In a note Mr. Austin's *England's Darling* is discussed. The contents of the other works are not indicated. Tennyson's neglect of Alfred is commented upon. *Vide infra* remarks upon Tennyson under General Mention.

³ Being the Ford Lectures for 1901. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1902.)

⁴ Meiningen, K. Keyssner, 1898.

their fidelity to history indicated. The works considered are those of Blackmore, Mallet and Thomson, de Redcliffe, and Austin. Then follows a detailed "Comparison of the Alfred-Figure" in which all passages are collected which bear upon the following aspects of Alfred :—" 1. The Soldier, 2. the Administrator, 3. the Scholar and Philosopher, 4. the Christian, 5. Personal Appearance, 6. the King, 7. the Husband, 8. the Father." In a brief "Conclusion" the superior merits of Mr. Austin's work over the three others are asserted. Since the author begins by referring to the statement of Mr. Austin that Alfred has never been celebrated by an English poet,¹ it may be supposed that the appearance of 'England's Darling' suggested Arnold's study. It is not apparent why the author should have chosen for discussion only the four works named above and omitted all others, many of which are of equal importance.

Finally, it is assumed that the scope of the present investigation is sufficiently independent of the three works just named.

¹ *England's Darling*, (New York and London, Macmillan & Co., 1896), Preface, p. vii.



ALFRED OF HISTORY.

CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE.

ASSER.

Although strictly speaking the sources of contemporary evidence regarding Alfred may be considered as threefold, namely Asser's Biography,¹ the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the personal references in Alfred's own works, yet the first named stands alone in supreme importance as the origin of nearly everything connected with the personal history of Alfred. For this reason it is a subject of particular regret that this unique work has not been more satisfactorily preserved. Not only has it suffered from obvious later interpolations, but its genuineness as a whole has been emphatically denied.

According to the evidence of the *Life* its author was a Welsh Monk of the Monastery of St. David's (Menevia), who was induced by Alfred to come to his court in the year 884. There Asser enjoyed the King's personal friendship, and received from him many favors. The *Life* purports to be written in Alfred's forty-fifth year (i. e. in 893), and the author gives no reason for its uncompleted condition. Apart from the *Life* of Alfred there is little to be learned of Asser. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the death of Asser, Bishop of Sherborne in 910,² and his name is signed to a number of charters between the years 900 and 909.³

¹ *Annales rerum gestarum Ælfredi Magni, auctore Asserio Menevensi*. The text may be found in *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, Petrie (London, 1848). An edition is in preparation by W. H. Stevenson, for the Clarendon Press. There are translations by J. Stevenson, *Church Historians* (London, 1853), vol. II, pt. II, and Giles, *Six Old English Chronicles* (Bohn's Library, 1872). For other editions *vide infra* under Biography.

² Plummer and Earle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, (Oxford, 1892), I, p. 94.

³ Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici*, (Eng. Hist. Soc., 1849), vols. II and V, charters 335, 336, 337, 1077, 1083 and 1087. In 1083 Asser is named as Bishop of Sherborne.

Moreover Alfred mentions "Asser my bishop" in the Introduction to his translation of Gregory's 'Pastorale.'¹ The occurrence of Asser's name in a list of the Bishops of St. David's given by Giraldus Cambriensis² (in the 12th century) may be disregarded, and so ends our meagre knowledge of Alfred's biographer.

The first attack upon the genuineness of the Life was the vigorous one by Thomas Wright in 1842.³ Previous to this it had, apart from the interpolations,⁴ been accepted as undoubtedly authentic.⁵ Wright showed that the work really consists of two parts, a general historical account identical with portions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and the author's personal observations upon Alfred's life. From this and from internal evidence⁶ he concluded that it is forgery of some monk of the 10th or 11th century. "At both periods it may have had a political use either as intended to encourage the Anglo-Saxons in resisting the Danes or in supporting the English party headed by Earl Godwin against

¹ Ed. Sweet (Ear. Eng. Text Soc., 1871), p. 6. *Whole Works of Alfred*, translation, (London, 1858), III, p. 66.

² (*Itinerarium Kambriæ*), Rolls Series, VI, p. 102. But for reasons that Asser was Bishop of St. David's, cf. *Mon. Hist. Britan.*, Preface, pp. 77, 78.

³ *Archæologia*, (London, 1842), XXIX, p. 192. Reprinted in *Essays on Archæological Subjects*, 1861, I, p. 172. The article upon Asser in the author's *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, 1842, p. 405, contains the same arguments in briefer form.

⁴ For the discussion of these *vide infra* Biography.

⁵ Pertz, *Monumenta Germanica historica*, I, p. 499, note 34. Lappenberg, *Geschichte von England*, (Hamburg, 1834), I, pp. XLVIII and 311. The following words may however suggest a suspicion: "Wahrlich, wäre alles dieses durch eine andere Hand uns berichtet als die höchstglaubwürdige des Bischofs Asser, des Zeitgenossen und Freundes Aelfreds, der noch während des Letztern Leben schrieb, dürfte etwa eine poetische Einkleidung, eine etwas spätere Abfassung irgend einen Zweifel begründen, hätte ein Walische Aehnliches von einem welschen Fürsten erzählt, wir würden alles eben Erwähnte denen überlassen müssen, welche Don Quixotes Lanze ererbt haben mögen, um sie für König Arthur und die Tafelrunde zu brechen." Thorpe's Translation of Lappenberg (London, 1845), II, p. 45, abridges this passage.

⁶ Wright's chief arguments are,—1. The doubtful character of the stories of Alfred's visit to Rome, education, and sickness; 2. The mention of St. Neot; 3. The accrediting to Asser of the See of Exeter, whereas this did not exist until much later (but see Plummer, p. 20). From the introduction to the *Cura Pastoralis*, one of the copies of which is addressed to Wulfsgige, Bishop of Sherborne, and which also mentions Asser as bishop, Wright supposes the latter to have been a bishop before he received the See of Sherborne.

Edward's Norman and French favorites." From this patriotic motive the author engrafted upon the Chronicle legends of Alfred obtained from tradition and from some Life of St. Neot, and thus, in order to give the book greater authority, pretended it was written by Asser. Wright was first answered by Lappenberg,¹ who admitted interpolations, but considered that the original could have been written in Alfred's time. Where the Chronicle and Asser are alike, he found the latter the more accurate and therefore independent. The use of British names for English places points to the truth of the work, while its unfinished condition, considered by Wright an evidence of forgery, really indicates the contrary. Lingard² makes an even more detailed examination of Wright's charges and concludes that they prove nothing. Finally Pauli follows Lappenberg and bases his Life of Alfred³ upon Asser. Although he thinks the historical portions depend upon the Chronicle, he considers those which are biographical as original, with the exception of three interpolations.⁴ Pauli also defends Asser's style, which Wright had called "a common-place specimen of monkish Latin."⁵

It is obvious from the preceding that the general faith in Asser had been but little shaken by Wright's suspicions.⁶ The question was next made the subject of discussion in a series of letters to the *Athenæum* in 1876. In reference to the date of the death of

¹ *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1844, I, pp. 527-530.

² *History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (London, 1845), II, p. 420. It is argued that the Chronicle and Asser drew from a common source, that Asser shows no internal contradictions, that the reference to St. Neot's life is merely a later insertion of an explanatory nature, and that Asser was at first Bishop of the western portion of the Diocese of Sherborne, and later succeeded to the whole. Lingard's general refutation of Wright is endorsed in *Mon. Hist. Britan.*, Preface, p. 78, note 12.

³ *König Ælfred* (Berlin, 1851). Thorpe's translation (Bohn's Library, 1857), Introduction, pp. 4-11.

⁴ The building of the long ships in 877, the residence with the cow-herd, and the Oxford story.

⁵ *Biog. Britan. Lit.*, p. 404.

⁶ Cf. also Kemble, *Saxons in England* (London, 1849), II, p. 42. Freeman, *Old English History*, 2d ed., 1871, p. 103. Green, *History of the English People*, 1877, I, p. 4. "The Life of Alfred, puzzling as it is in some ways, is probably really Asser's work, and certainly of contemporary authority."

Halfdene,¹ Mr. W. H. Howorth was lead to attack, and Bishop William Clifford, to defend the integrity of Asser.² The criticisms are for the most part along the same lines as those of Wright. They regard particularly the internal contradictions, the failure of subsequent writers (such as Florence of Worcester, and Simeon of Durham) to refer to Asser by name, the appearance of the remains of the MS., and the supposed imitation of certain passages from Ethelwerd who wrote about the year 1000. Howorth concludes that the *Life*, "honey-combed with blunders and inconsistencies," was probably written in the early part of the eleventh century, being "a collection of traditions brought together a century and a half after the events they refer to happened." Clifford merely shows how the text may be emended in such a way as to explain seeming inconsistencies (as in the story of Alfred's sickness), and promises a more elaborate defence later. Yet another attack, based chiefly on internal evidence, appeared in the *Times* in March, 1898,³ from an anonymous correspondent, who contended that the *Life* was a compilation of the twelfth century. This was answered at once by Sir Frederick Pollock,⁴ who concludes "that we have in the Asserian *Life* of Alfred a genuine original, more or less overlaid with additions whose date is still uncertain, not counting the much later apochryphal passages which all recent critics have rejected."

The general willingness to accept Asser as genuine is apparent in all of the many recent works concerned with Alfred, but in none of these is the opinion based upon such careful investigation as in 'The *Life and Times of Alfred the Great*,' by Charles Plummer, M. A.⁵ Although this author "started with a strong prejudice against the authenticity of Asser," he concludes from his investigations that the *Life* was the work of a native of Wales and that it was certainly composed in its original form prior to

¹ For the letters bearing on this question alone cf. p. 11.

² *Athenæum*, 1876, Jan. 15, p. 88; Mar. 25, p. 425; May 27, p. 727; Sept. 2, p. 307; 1877, Aug. 4, p. 145. Clifford's reply, *ibid.*, 1876, June 24, p. 859.

³ *London Times*, 1898, Mar. 17, p. 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Mar. 26. Cf. also *Literature*, 1890, Aug. 20. Draper, *Alfred the Great* p. 26, quotes Professor Yorke Powell (*Hampshire Chronicle*, June 18, 1898) for a similar view.

⁵ Being the Ford Lectures for 1901 (Oxford, 1902).

974, and may therefore be considered as Asser's.¹ In spite of this the author adds, "still the book remains a puzzle both in form and substance."

What may be expected as the final word upon this much debated subject will appear in the edition of Asser to be published shortly by Mr. W. H. Stevenson.² It may be here stated that on inquiry of the present writer Mr. Stevenson very courteously intimated his opinion in these words: "My own conclusion is that the work, apart from the Parkerian interpolations, is genuine—that is, it is a book written by a Welshman at about the date it bears (893), and I can therefore see no reason to doubt that Asser was the author." In view of the preceding it seems fair to assume that Asser's *Life* has now safely weathered its storm of criticism. With this taken for granted, a summary of its contents, omitting the obvious interpolations, will next be considered.

Since the text of Asser, like that of most of the medieval authors to be quoted, is sufficiently accessible, it will here be enough merely to summarize its principal contents. As already noticed, these consist of biographical accounts of Alfred inserted in a series of *Annals* which for the most part agree closely with the Anglo-

¹ Plummer's chief views briefly summarized are as follows,—1. The author's language, style, and knowledge of Welsh affairs prove him to have been a native of that country. Detailed examination of the style points to a single composer. 2. In certain cases later glosses have been taken into the text. Thus emended the passage in the story of Alfred's sickness which speaks of St. Neot's body in its Cornish shrine, proves that the original was written before the transference of the body to Huntingdonshire, which took place about 974. 3. The contradictory story of the sickness can be explained by the conflation of two different versions. 4. Alfred possibly placed the districts around Exeter under Asser's episcopal supervision, and this would account for Asser's title of bishop in the *Pastorale*. [Cf. Hunt, *The English Church* (Macmillan's, 1899), p. 277, "Alfred may have given him the minister at Exeter and appointed him co-bishop with Wulfsgie, bishop of Sherborne."] 5. Asser certainly made use of the *Chronicle*. Plummer concludes (p. 52): "On the whole, then, Asser is an authority to be used with criticism and caution; partly because we have always to be alive to the possibility of interpolation, partly because the writer's Celtic imagination is apt to run away with him. But that there is a nucleus which is the genuine work of a single writer, a South Walian contemporary of Alfred, I feel tolerably sure, and I know no reason why that South Walian contemporary should not be Asser of Menevia."

² *Asser's Life of King Alfred, together with the Annals of St. Neot's, erroneously ascribed to Asser. Edited with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, 1902).

Saxon Chronicle. Interesting differences however occur where Asser gives the Welsh equivalents for Saxon names,¹ or illuminates certain passages with personal knowledge. He has, for instance, seen with his own eyes the small thorn tree around which the battle had raged at Æcesdun, and adds the stirring story of, how at the same battle, Alfred charged like a wild boar while his brother remained praying in his tent.²

The 'Annals' begin with a dedication to Alfred. The contents follow, arranged according to years. Alfred is born in 849³ at Wantage in Berkshire. His genealogy is traced through his father back to Adam, and his mother Osburgha is described as "a very religious woman, noble alike by birth and nature."⁴ After a series of Annals, concerned chiefly with the wars with the Danes, there is told, as in the Chronicle, how in 853 Æthelwulf sent Alfred to Rome. Asser also tells of the escorting party, and how Pope Leo anointed the young prince as King and received him as his adopted son. Two years later Æthelwulf himself takes Alfred on a second visit to Rome (not mentioned in the Chronicle). Æthelwulf returns to England with his bride Judith of France, and the revolt of his son Æthelbald ends. Apropos of Judith's equal rights upon the throne is related the story of the wicked Eadburgh which the writer has often heard from Alfred. After the death of Æthelwulf, concerning whose piety much is recorded, he is succeeded in turn by his sons Æthelbald (who marries Judith), Æthelbert, and Æthelred. After the latter's accession to the throne begins the first of the accounts of Alfred's personal history. The author's words are, "And now, to use nautical language, I will no longer commit my vessel to the winds and the waves and, putting out to sea, steer a roundabout course through the massacres of war and the enumeration of years, but I must return to the object which first stirred me up to this undertaking. I must now treat, as far as I have obtained information, of the infancy and boyhood of my venerated master Alfred King of the Anglo-Saxons, as

¹ Cf. Plummer, *Life and Times of Alfred*, p. 43 ff.

² *Mon. Hist. Brit.*, p. 476. Edition of Wise (Oxford, 1722), p. 22.

³ But for reasons to suppose that the correct date is 848, cf. p. 15.

⁴ "religiosa nimium fœmina, nobilis ingenio, nobilis et genere." *M. H. B.*, p. 469. Wise, p. 4.

briefly and as fully as I possibly can.”¹ After this curious introduction follows the description of Alfred’s youth and love of study. As a boy he exceeds all his brothers in amiability and in appearance. In spite of his desire for learning, he remains, through the neglect of his relatives and guardians, ignorant of letters until his twelfth year. But his love of Saxon poems is very great. His skill in hunting is likewise noticed. Then follows the story of his mother’s gift of the book as a prize. Next is noted the book of devotions constantly carried in the King’s bosom, and how his studies were hindered by lack of teachers in his youth, and by diseases in later years. “Yet,” adds the writer, “to the present time he preserves the same insatiable desire for knowledge.” After this the Annals proper are resumed for the year 867. In the next occurs Alfred’s marriage. Ethelwitha is not mentioned by name, although her father and mother are particularly noticed. With more Annals follows the unavailing expedition of Æthelred and Alfred to help Burhred of Mercia against the Danes. In 871 the Danes make a raid and are attacked without success by the brothers at Reading. Then follows the victory at Æcesdun, told in a more detailed manner by Asser than by the Chronicle. The Saxons are next defeated at Baseng. Soon after Æthelred dies and Alfred becomes King, although he might have done this sooner had he so desired.² Alfred takes the crown unwillingly. He is defeated in his first engagement, for his followers have been reduced by eight battles and numerous skirmishes during the same year. A temporary peace follows which is soon broken by the Danes. Alfred wins a naval victory in 875. In the next year at Wareham the Danes again swear a solemn peace and again break it. Then comes the period of Alfred’s greatest distress. “At the same time (878)

¹ Stevenson’s translation. “Sed, ut more navigantium loquar, ne diutius navim undis et velamentis concedentes, et a terra longius enavigantes longum circumferamur inter tantas bellorum clades, et annorum enumerationes; ad id, quod nos maxime ad hoc opus incitavit, nobis redeundum esse censeo: scilicet aliquantulum, quantum mee cognitioni innotuit, de infantilibus et puerilibus domini mei venerabilis Ælfredi Angulsaxonum regis moribus hoc in loco breviter inserendum esse existimo.” *M. H. B.*, p. 473. Wise, p. 15.

² Asser seems to give as the reason for this Alfred’s moral character and skill in arms. Cf. *M. H. B.*, p. 477. Wise, p. 24. The title “Secundarius” applied by Asser to Alfred is discussed by Plummer, pp. 88 ff.

Alfred the King of the West Saxons, so often mentioned before, with a few of his nobles and some of his soldiers and vassals, passed a restless life in much anxiety among the woodland and marshy tracts of the county of Somerset. They had nothing for their use but what they obtained, either openly or craftily from the Pagans and from those Christians who had submitted to their rule, by constant assaults; and as we read in the Life of the holy father St. Neot, he was long concealed in the dwelling of one of his own cowherds."¹

In the same year the brother of Hynguar and Healfden² is slain with his troops before the citadel of Cynwit, in Devon, while Alfred and his followers make a citadel upon Athelney from which they attack the enemy. Alfred now appears to the inhabitants of Somerset and Wiltshire at Ægbryht's-stone in Selwood Forest. He is joyfully received, and proceeding to Æglea and then to Ethandun achieves a complete victory at the latter place. The Danes give hostages; Godrum is baptized and received by Alfred as his adopted son. The chrism-loosing takes place at Wædmor when Alfred bestows many gifts upon the conquered king. Another naval battle is gained by Alfred in 882. Two years later he relieves Rochester from its Danish besiegers and forces them to return to France, for which country a large part of the Danes had now deserted England.

¹ Stevenson's translation. "Eodem tempore Ælfred sæpe supra memoratus rex occidentalium Saxonum cum paucis suis nobilibus, et etiam cum quibusdam militibus, et vasallis per sylvestria et gronnosa Summurtuensis pagæ loca in magna tribulatione, inquietam vitam ducebat, nihil enim habebat, quo uteretur, nisi quod a Paganis, et etiam a Christianis, qui se Paganorum subdiderant domino, frequentibus irruptionibus aut clam, aut etiam palam subtraheret et, ut in vita Sancti Patris Neoti legitur, apud quendam suum vaccarium." *M. H. B.*, p. 480. Wise, p. 30. At this point Bishop Parker inserted the extract from the *Pseudo-Asser* which tells of the cakes, and of Alfred's reproof by St. Neot for the sins of early life. Another considerable insertion by Parker telling of the building of long-ships and taken from the *Flores Historiarum*, with a shorter one from the *Pseudo-Asser* are placed by him under the preceding year of 877. *Vide infra* under Biography.

² Ubba. The name is supplied in Gaimar's *Lestorie des Engles*. Cf. Plummer's note, p. 104. The passage is discussed by Howorth and Clifford, *Athenæum*, 1876, Jan. 15, p. 88; Feb. 12, p. 233; Mar. 4, p. 329; Mar. 18, p. 395. Ethelwerd and Simeon of Durham, say Halfdene himself is killed.

Here begins the second of the digressions from the annals of the Chronicle, which is separated from the third long biographical insertion only by quotations from the Chronicle for the years 886 and 887, which tell nothing of Alfred except his rebuilding of London and sending of alms to Rome. Hence the rest of the work may be considered practically to consist of Asser's biographical material. The introduction to this part is in the same inflated style as that of the one already observed, and like it contains the metaphor of a ship returning to port.¹ Then follows, first, the confused story of the sickness. In the order told this is as follows,—After his marriage Alfred was seized by a severe disease unknown to all physicians, which has lasted from his twentieth to his fortieth year and even longer. Different explanations are given of the ailment, among others that it was *fici* which he had from his infancy. On a certain occasion he stopped while hunting at the shrine of St. Gueryr and St. Neot to pray that his disease might be exchanged for another. He is soon after healed although he had suffered from early youth with the malady. Then, in order to show his piety, are told Alfred's youthful struggles with the flesh, and how he would rise early and pray in the churches to be freed of them by the visitation of some disease. Then he was visited by the *fici* from which he suffered for many years until the new and more harassing disease after the nuptials. From this, or from the fear of this, he has had no relief from his twentieth to his forty-fifth year.²

Next follows the account of Alfred's children and their education, and of the schools which, with others, they attended. Alfred's varied occupations are next described,—hunting, building, and education. His piety is dwelt upon at especial length. He is helped in his various studies by Werfrith, Plegmund, Æthelstan, and Werwulf, from Mercia, and by Grimbald, and John, from Gaul. The account of Asser's own invitation follows in considerable detail, with the incidental sickness at Winchester. After

¹ Igitur ut ad id, unde digressus sum, redeam, ne diuturna enavigatione portum optatæ quietis omittere cogar, etc. *M. H. B.*, p. 484. Wise, p. 39.

² "It would be difficult to cram more inconsistencies into so short a space. . . . In this triumph of ineptitude we may, I think, detect a conflation of two separate traditions." Plummer, pp. 26 and 27.

the intervening annals already mentioned, the last and longest biographical portion occurs under the year 887.¹ It tells of how Alfred first learned to read and of the Manual which he kept. His desire for learning and his piety are again dilated upon, and the sickness from his twentieth to forty-fifth year mentioned. In the account of the building of a monastery at Athelney is introduced a digression which tells at length of the attempt of two monks to kill their abbot, John the Old-Saxon. Alfred also founds a nunnery over which he places his daughter Æthelgeofu as abbess. The rest of this portion of the *Life* tells of the exact distribution of the King's revenue, incidentally stating the three-fold division of his troops, of the device of candles to tell the time, and of the reproof of the bad judges. Finally it ends abruptly while describing the desire for learning which Alfred had instilled into his people.

That part of the 'Chronicon ex Chronicis'² of Florence of Worcester (*d.* 1118) which treats of Alfred, is for the most part so nearly identical with the work of Asser that it is best considered in close connection with it. The fact that Florence never mentions Asser as his source is a most curious and unexplained one, and with the similar neglect by Simeon of Durham has been advanced,³ as already noticed, as a disproof of Asser's early date. The differences of the two works are for the most part confined to the order in which the material is presented. That of Florence is much more satisfactory. Thus the account of Alfred's youth does not occur until his accession to the throne in 871⁴ and with it is joined the story of the sickness which Asser tells in his second biographical record under the year 884. Moreover, although the wording is generally the same, the order of the account by Florence gives a far clearer idea of what is meant. Alfred prays for a disease which may keep under the lusts of the flesh. His first complaint

¹ *M. H. B.*, p. 491. Wise, p. 55.

A little before this, under the year 886, Camden inserted his famous interpolation concerning the strife at Oxford. *Vide infra* under Biography.

² *M. H. B.*, p. 522. Thorpe, *Eng. Hist. Soc.* (London, 1848).

³ Howorth, *Athenæum*, 1876, Mar. 25, p. 425. Mr. Plummer has apparently not attempted to explain this.

⁴ Thorpe, vol. I, p. 85.

(*fici*) is then sent, but this becomes so severe that at the shrine of the two saints he begs that it may be exchanged for another. He is then freed of his first trouble, but is attacked by the second on his marriage day, and continues to suffer with it from his twentieth to his forty-fifth year and longer. The superiority of the present narrator's method is obvious. After the mention of the marriage, Florence naturally passes to the account of the royal children and their education. Then follow Alfred's various occupations and piety. The battle of Merton, omitted by Asser but found in the Chronicle, is mentioned. For 872 is told with some additions the account of the learned men summoned by Alfred to his court and found in Asser under the year 884. Florence closes the list with Asser, "called out of the monastery of St. David, in the western extremity of Britain." The sinking of one hundred and twenty pagan ships is mentioned for 887, a fact wanting in Asser but found in the Chronicle. For 878 is omitted the sentence in which Asser tells of the cow-herd's dwelling in which Alfred lived. An addition is the account of Denewulf¹ (for 879) who succeeds Dunbert as Bishop of Winchester, and who, according to rumor, Alfred first met as an illiterate herdsman feeding swine. Finding that he was a man of talent, the King caused him to be educated and later made Bishop of Winchester. The death of Asser Bishop of Sherborne is, curious to say, recorded for the year 883, and his name does not occur again. Of course all account of the relations of Alfred and Asser is omitted. The final biographical portion of Asser under the year 887 occurs for the same date in Florence but it is considerably abbreviated in the latter. It is mentioned that Alfred began to read on St. Martin's day but nothing is said of his teacher. In the description of the candles nothing is told of the horn shades mentioned in the earlier biographer. Florence marks the notice of Alfred's death with the first of the eulogies which a long line of historians has bestowed upon him,² but he considers

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 97.

² *Famosus, bellicosus, victoriosus, viduarum, pupillorum, orphanorum pauperumque provisor studiosus, poetarum Saxonorum peritissimus, suæ genti carissimus, affabilis omnibus, liberalissimus; prudentia, fortitudine, justitia, temperantia præditus; infirmitate quam assidue laborabat patientissimus, in exequendis judiciis indagator discretissimus. Ibid.*, I, p. 116.

his son Edward, though inferior in learning yet greater in dignity, might, and grandeur than his father.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, apart from those portions which have already been noticed as employed by Asser, gives but little additional knowledge of Alfred and even this is chiefly in regard to his military operations. In the regular course of the narrative Alfred's birth is not mentioned, but Mr. Plummer¹ draws attention to the best authority for its date in the genealogical preface prefixed to one of the MSS. According to this Alfred was born in 848. The Chronicle records only one of the visits to Rome, and although it mentions his consecration by the Pope² as King there is no further evidence as in Asser that Alfred had any claim to the throne superior to that of his brothers. The account of the year of Alfred's greatest distress is given in these words,—“Many of the people they (the Danes) drove beyond the sea, and of the remainder the greater part they subdued and forced to obey them, except King Alfred, and he with a small band, with difficulty retreated to the woods and to the fastnesses of the moors.”³ At the death of Pope Marinus in 883 it is noted that he had sent a piece of the true cross to Alfred, and in the same year the King's alms are carried to India and Rome. The defeat of “the brother of Inwær and Healfdene” takes place in Devon, but the citadel of Cynwit is not specified as in Asser. The capture of the war-flag called the Raven is added. The Chronicle records for the year 893 the return of the Danes from France to make an attack upon Kent, which is of course wanting in Asser who gives nothing later than 887. Alfred wins the victories at Farnham and Benfleet. The Saxons capture the wife and two sons of Hæsten, one of whom is Alfred's god-son. The King returns them all to the Dane. Another victory is won at Buttington on the Severn by Æthelred the alderman and others. In 896 Alfred captures a number of Danish ships by deflecting the waters of the river Lea. Finally, in the following year there is a general dispersion of the Danes, and the Chronicle records thanks to God that the English nation

¹ *Life and Times of Alfred*, p. 70.

² Plummer and Earle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, vol. I, p. 64.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 74. The translation is Stevenson's, *Church Historians*, vol. II, pt. I, p. 46.

has not been utterly broken down. At the same time, however, to prevent attacks upon the coast, Alfred has the long-ships built according to his own particular designs. A severe engagement is fought with these ships on the coast of Devon. The crews of two of the enemy's wrecked ships are brought to Winchester and hanged by Alfred's order. His death is recorded on the 26th of October, 901,¹ and is, strange to say, marked by no eulogy.

We have so far summarized the account of Alfred which is preserved by the contemporary writings concerned with him. To this must however be added the impression of his character which is mirrored in the few personal references of his own works. It is enough here² to note three of these which have particular importance, as all are written in the first person. They are the well known passages in the Laws, in the preface to the 'Cura Pastoralis,' and in the translation to the 'Boethius.' In the first the King gives his reasons for the collection of the Laws and his manner of so doing,³ in the second is expressed his solicitude for the sake of education in the devastated country,⁴ while the often quoted words of the third seem particularly to give the key-note of Alfred's character.⁵

MEDIEVAL WRITERS.

The list of medieval writers who, to a greater or less extent, mention Alfred, is of course a long one, and is not exhausted by those here collected. These, however, contain all of the chief tributes, as well as all of the legends which have become associ-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

² The subject is carefully reviewed in Plummer, p. 151 ff.

³ "I then Alfred, gathered these together and bade to write many of those that our foregoers held,—those that to me seemed good : and many of those that seemed not good, I set aside with mine witan's counsel, and in other wise bade to hold them : for I that I durst not venture much of mine own to set in writing, for that it was unknown to me what of this would be liking to those that were after us." *Works of Alfred* (London, 1858), II, p. 125. For the original see Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, 1840, p. 26.

⁴ Sweet, *Ear. Eng. Text Soc.* (London, 1871), pp. 2-8.

⁵ "This is now especially to be said ; that I wished to live honourably whilst I lived, and after my life to leave to the men who were after me my memory in good works." *Works of Alfred*, II, p. 452. For the original see Sedgfield, *The West-Saxon Boethius* (Oxford, 1899), p. 41.

ated with his name.¹ Although it will be best to regard these works in their chronological order according to the centuries in which they belong, the first place may be given to a source the date of whose origin is in some doubt. This source is to be found in the Lives of St. Neot, and has probably influenced the popular conception of Alfred more than any other, for its legends were interpolated by Bishop Parker into his edition of Asser, and hence long believed to be an integral portion of that work.

According to the testimony of the Lives themselves Neot was a contemporary of Alfred, and died about 877, but from obvious internal evidence it is now assured that "any Life or Lives which may be supposed to have afforded materials for these later compositions must necessarily have been written long after Alfred's time, and therefore are unworthy of credit."² Hardy would place the date of composition of the oldest of the Lives about 986, but Plummer takes exception to this, and from internal evidence considers 1012 the earliest date possible, while he inclines to an even later one.³

There are five Lives of St. Neot extant, and it is probable that more existed. The oldest of those preserved is in the form of an Anglo-Saxon Homily,⁴ and contains the same general features in regard to Alfred as the later Lives which are all in Latin. That part of the Life which is of importance here is briefly as follows:—St. Neot is often visited by Alfred, whom he warns of future sorrow, and causes to send offerings to Pope Marinus on behalf of the English School at Rome. After the saint's death all happens as he had foretold. Guthrum and his army possess the country, and Alfred learning that he is near, flies for fear and

¹ Full acknowledgment is again made to the works of Arnold (pp. 4-18), Draper (pp. 127-136), and Plummer (pp. 53-68). Although the present writer had begun his investigations before the appearance of the two last named, it is enough to say that this portion is greatly supplemented by their use. A translation of the extracts from most of the medieval writers in question is to be found in Conybeare, *Alfred in the Chronicles* (London, Elliot Stock, 1900).

² Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue*, Rolls Series, 1862, vol. I, pt. II, p. 547.

³ Pp. 55 and 56, where the whole subject of date is thoroughly discussed.

⁴ The text is printed by Gorham, *History and Antiquities of Eynesbury and St. Neot's* (London, 1824), and by Wülcker, *Anglia*, III, 104. The latter editor supposes the Homily to be by Ælfric (*fl.* 1006).

forsakes his chiefs and warriors, and all his people. Then he goes skulking through hedges and paths, so that, through the guidance of God, he comes to Athelney and desires shelter in the house of a swineherd. On a certain day he is warming himself by the fire when the bad-tempered house-wife is called away. She says to him in angry mood: "Turn the loaf so that it does not burn for I see daily thou art a great eater." The king is obedient to the "yfele wif," but "lamenting called to his Lord begging his mercy."¹

Then Neot appears to the king by night and promises him an end of his troubles. "I go before thee, follow after me, and thy people also." All happens as the saint foretells. The enemy is defeated and Guthrum and thirty of his warriors beg for peace. After this "Alfred's kingdom grew, and his fame spread wide, for he was learned in divine writings, so that he surpassed bishops and mass-priests and archdeacons, and christianity flourished well in those times." When Alfred dies the account ends that "God rewarded him for his righteousness."

In this, the oldest of the Neot Lives, there is to be noted the absence of any specific charges made by the saint against the King's conduct. His faults are merely those of weakness and cowardice, not as yet elaborated into the pride and cruelty of later versions.

What is apparently the next of the Lives in time of composition² gives a more extended account, adding several particulars.

¹ Ða Ælfred king, ðe we ær embe spæcon, ðæt ofaxode, ðæt se here swa stiðlic wæs and swa neh Englelande, he sone forfyrht fleames cepte and his cæmpen ealle forlet and his hertogen and ealle his ðeode, madmes and madmfaten, and his life gebearh. Ferde ða lutigende geond heges and weges, geond wudes and feldes, swa ðæt he ðurh godes wissunge gesund becom to Æðelungege and on sumes swanes huse his hleow gernde and eac swylce him and his yfele wife georne herde. Hit gelamp sume dæige ðæt ðæs swanes wif hætte hire ofen and se king ðær-big sæt hleowinde hine beo ðan fyre ðan heowen nyten de, ðæt he king wære. Ða wearð ðæt yfele wif færinge astyrod and cwæð to ðan kinge kinge eorre mode: 'Wænd ðu ða hlafes, ðæt heo ne forbeornen: for ðan ic geseo dæighwamlice, ðæt ðu mycel æte eart.' He wæs sone gehirsum ðan yfele wife, for ðan he nede scolde. He ða, se gode king, mid mycelre angsumnyse and siccetunge to his drihtene clypode his mildse biddende.—*Anglia*, III, pp. 111-112. The text is here printed without emendation.

² Printed in *Acta Sanctorum* (Paris and Rome, 1868) for July (31st day), vol. VII, pp. 330-340.

Neot is of royal birth, and apparently Alfred's own brother, since he is the son of "Edulfus (Æthelwulf), the ruler of Wessex and Kent." Neot visits Pope Marinus at Rome. When Alfred, through his advice, endows the English school, the Pope sends the king a piece of the true cross. It is expressly stated that Alfred and Neot are relatives (though, as just said, they should by birth be actually brothers), and the former is severely reprovved by the latter for his sins of tyranny and pride.¹ The incident of the cakes is told in much extended form: "Now it happened one day that the swineherd had driven out his herds as usual to their pasture, and the king was left alone with his wife in the house. Thereupon the woman in the course of her household duties had lit a fire and placed the cakes for her own and her husband's dinner in a cooking pan upon it to bake. Being then, as is apt to happen with poor folk, occupied for some time with other business, presently she ran back anxiously to the fire and found the cakes burnt on one side; whereupon she forthwith assailed the king with reproaches: 'What are you sitting, thinking here for, fellow, and can't take the trouble to turn the cakes? What's your country? Where did you learn manners? What idleness! What do you expect to become of you? You call yourself a noble? You won't help to cook the cakes, but you are not slow to eat them when they are cooked.'"² The King takes all patiently. St. Neot appears to him twice in visions, and in the battle actually leads the English to victory. As before, Alfred repents, and dies virtuous and honored. The remaining three Lives³ do not introduce any other marked features. One

¹ Dei Servus regem ut dominum cum honore, et ut fratrem cum amore suscipiens, benedixit, edocuit, et erudit eum scientia, viam prudentiæ ostendens illi: pravos etiam ejus redarguens actus, jussit in melius converti. . . . Neque enim alienus . . . , sed ex eodem sanguine cretus. *Ibid.*, p. 336.

² This translation accompanied Cotton MS. Claudian A. V. as exhibited in the British Museum. Its variations from the *Life* in the *Acta Sanctorum* are slight. In the latter the cakes are explained, "quos nonnulli liridas appellant." *Lirida* is the same as *collyrida*, a sort of bread variously described. Cf. Ducange, *Glossarium* (Paris, 1842).

³ Two are printed by Whitaker, *Life of St. Neot*. One is an abridgment by John of Tynemouth; Printed by Horstman, *Nova Legenda Anglie*, (Oxford, 1901), vol. II, pp. 213-218.

of them is merely "a miserable versification of the greater part"¹ of the one just considered.

One other work which belongs to the 10th century might be expected to give important information, as its author, Ethelwerd,² claims to be descended from Alfred's brother, Æthelred. It need, however, be only mentioned as first recording the name of Æthelnoth, Duke of Somerset, in connection with Alfred's sojourn there, and of Odda, Duke of Devon, who is besieged in a castle by "Heafden, the brother of Igwar."³ Ethelwerd omits the name of Cynwit.

For the 11th century there is no authority for Alfred with the exception of Florence of Worcester, already considered with Asser, but in the hundred years next succeeding occur a number of authors who contribute large legendary additions.

Since the Lives of St. Neot have been recently discussed, it may be well in the first place to consider the work generally known as the 'Pseudo-Asser' or 'Annals of Asser,' and probably composed in the 12th century,⁴ from which Bishop Parker obtained the Neot legends which he inserted into his edition of Asser in 1574. This work bears the title 'Chronicon Fani Sancti Neoti, sive Annales Joan. Asserii ut nonnullis videtur,'⁵ the second part of which is scarcely merited. The portion of the Annals which concerns the present inquiry is compiled from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Asser, and some Neot Life at present undiscovered, but agreeing in general features with the others. The first of Parker's interpolations from this source relate to the famines for the years 868 and 869. An interesting proof of his methods seems obvious in a passage (for 876) which concerns the wonderful vision of Rollo of Normandy. The unscrupulous editor contents himself with inserting only a mention of the dream,

¹ Hardy, *ut supra*.

² *Fabii Ethelwerdi Chronicorum, M. H. B.*, p. 498.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 515 and 517.

⁴ "The work was probably compiled towards the latter end of the 12th century; but whencesoever it may have originated in its present form, the extract from Abbo, who wrote fourscore years after Asser's death, at once puts an end to all pretence for assigning it to Asser." Hardy (*ut supra*), p. 557.

⁵ Gale, *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores Veteres*, (Oxford, 1691), vol. I, p. 141. Hardy (*ut supra*) says the title to the MS. "has been prefixed in a modern hand."

but refers the reader to its original source with the words,—“De hoc Rollone vide plura in Annalibus.”¹ But the most important tribute levied by Parker upon the Annals is that which contains the familiar story of the cakes, and Neot’s reproofs of Alfred’s early sins.² In this, the best known form of the often repeated story, Alfred is mending his bows and arrows when his negligence arouses the peasant-woman’s wrath. She expresses it in hexameters possibly adopted from some earlier metrical form. “Look, man, the cakes are burning and you do not take the trouble to turn them; when the time for eating them comes, then you are active enough.”³ The unlucky woman little thinks that her guest is King Alfred who has won so many battles against the Pagans. In the opinion of the author, expressed in pious and inflated language, these misfortunes were sent because at the beginning of his reign, and while still young, Alfred had manifested the volatility of youth, and refused to listen to the grievances of his subjects.⁴ And although Neot, his relative, predicted his punish-

¹*M. H. B.*, p. 479. Wise, p. 28. The original is in Gale, p. 165.

²*M. H. B.*, p. 480. Wise, p. 30. Gale, p. 166. It may be questioned in this regard whether even the mention of the cowherd, apart from the story of the cakes, was not taken by Parker from the *Pseudo-Asser*, and was, therefore, not originally in Asser. The note of Wise, p. 30 (cf. also *M. H. B.*, Preface, p. 80, note 1), throws suspicion on all beginning with the words “Contigit autem die quodam, ut rustica . . . pararet ad coquendam panes,” etc. Is it not possible that Wise made a slip in his editing, and should have included the preceding clause “et ut in vita sancti patris Neoti legitur apud quendam suum vaccarium”? (*Vide supra*, p. 11.) These words are absent from Florence, and from the two 16th century Asser MSS. (cf. *M. H. B.*, p. 480, note c). In the *Pseudo-Asser* the sentence reads “Et ut in vita Sancti Patris Neoti legitur *diu latebat* apud quendam suum vaccarium.” Pauli (*Life of Alfred*, ed. Thorpe, p. 102) thinks the whole cowherd story may have begun with Florence of Worcester’s account of Denewulf (*Vide supra*, p. 14). Mr. Stevenson’s expected work will doubtless treat this question.

³ Urere quos cernis panes, gyrare moraris,
Cum nimium gaudes hos manducare calentes.

Giles (*Six Old Eng. Chronicles*, p. 60) translates “as every housewife in Somersetshire would understand:”

Ca’sn thee mind the ka-aks, man, an’ doosen zee ’em burn?
I’m boun thee’s eat ’em vast enough, az zoon as ’tiz the turn.

“quia in primo tempore regni sui, cum adhuc juvenis erat, animoque juvenili detentus fuerat, homines sui regni sibi subjecti, qui ad eum venerant . . . ; ille vero noluit eos audire,” etc. *M. H. B.*, p. 481. Wise, p. 31. Gale, p. 167.

ment, he rejected the prophecy. Thus Alfred came into distress. Another sentence of this passage, not adopted by Parker, tells how Neot after death appeared to the king, consoling him, and promising a release from his sorrows.

With the victory at Cynwit castle the Annals supply, and Parker transfers, the account of the Raven war-standard, which is barely mentioned in the Chronicle, and altogether disregarded by Asser. Here it is said to have been woven in a single day by Hungar and Habba, the daughters of Lodebroch, and that the figure of the Raven appeared as if flying before victory, while it hung without motion before defeat.¹ A passage, disregarded by Parker, tells of Neot's appearance to Alfred before the battle of Ethandun. The saint's words are quoted in which he predicts a victory, and declares that he himself will go all day before the King's banners so that he may contend against the enemy without fear. Alfred has now atoned for the arrogance of his youth. The last passage which need be mentioned records the death of truth-speaking Alfred,² who died on the 26th of November, in the year 900, and was laid in St. Peter's in Westminster, in a mausoleum of the most precious porphyry marble. This Parker added to the abrupt ending of the original Asser.

There are, however, other authors of the 12th century who are still untouched by this legendary influence. That part of Henry of Huntingdon's '*Historia Anglorum*'³ which concerns Alfred's reign contains nothing of importance beyond the facts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. His description of the naval battle of the year 871 may be mentioned, as it is made more vivid by the account of the English of the stranded ship, "beating their breasts and tearing

¹"dicunt enim quod tres sorores Hungari et Habbæ, filiæ videlicet Lodebrochi illud vexillum texerunt, et totum paraverunt illud uno meridiano tempore: dicunt etiam, quod in omni bello, ubi præcederet idem signum, si victoriam adepturi essent, appareret in medio signi quasi corvus vivens volitans: sin vero vincendi in futuro fuissent, penderet directe nihil movens: et hoc sæpe probatum est." *M. H. B.*, p. 481. Wise, p. 33. Gale, p. 167. Pauli (*ut supra*, p. 96) refers to a similar standard in Langebeck, *Scriptores rerum Danicarum*, v, 95; and Maseres, *Encomium Emmæ*, (*Historiæ Anglicanæ*), p. 16.

²"Ælfrædus veridicus, vir in bello per omnia strenuissimus, rex occidentalium Saxonum nobilissimus, prudens vero et religiosus atque sapientissimus." *M. H. B.*, p. 498. Wise, p. 72. Gale, p. 172.

³Arnold, *Rolls Series*, 1879, pp. 141-152.

their hair" that they cannot give their comrades help.¹ Henry records the warlike character of Alfred's daughter, Ethelfleda,² but her husband, Æthelred, whose death devolved so much authority upon herself, here becomes "her infirm father" Etherned. In the description of this "terror virgo virorum," as well as in that of Alfred, the author, as is his custom, employs verse. The lines to Alfred, which have been often quoted,³ begin thus:—

Nobilitas innata tibi probitatis honorem
Armipotens Ælfredi, dedit, probitasque laborem.⁴

The author bids farewell to Ethelfleda, with the words:—

Jam nec Cæsari tantum meruere triumphi
Cæsare splendor, virgo virago, vale.⁵

The next source to be considered is the pious chronicle which associates Alfred's name with that of the northern saint, Cuthbert. This is the 'Historia Regum' of Simeon of Durham (*fl.* 1130);⁶ the part which concerns Alfred being dependent upon Asser. Into this is inserted, for the year 877, how Alfred was encouraged by Cuthbert in a special revelation, and informed that he would win the coming battle, and how he afterwards always held the saint in especial honor.

In the 'History of the Church of Durham' it is further stated that, on account of the overpowering forces of the enemy, Alfred was obliged to lie in hiding for *three years*, in the marshes of *Glastonbury!*⁷ Then the saint appears in the vision, and his words are recorded in which he promises the kingdom to Alfred

¹ Plummer, p. 61, notes the picturesque phrase which says the Danes "covered the land like locusts."

² Arnold, p. 157. Derived from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (particularly the MSS. relating to Mercian affairs), Plummer and Earle (*ut supra*), p. 97; *M. H. B.*, p. 375 ff.; and from Florence of Worcester, Thorpe (*ut supra*), I, pp. 121-123.

³ Richard of Cirencester quotes a part of them as forming the epitaph on Alfred's tomb (*vide infra*). They also appear uncredited on the title-page of Parker's *Asser*.

⁴ Arnold, p. 152.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁶ *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, Arnold, Rolls Series, 1885, vol. II, pp. 81 ff. For the arguments upon the early date of Asser from the two recensions of the *Historia Regum* cf. Plummer, p. 31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 62.

and his descendents. On the next morning some of the king's followers assemble, a victory is soon gained, and Alfred gratefully sends gifts to the saint's shrine by his son Edward. Another passage makes Alfred later obtain the kingdom of Northumbria upon the death of Guthred (*sic*).

The 'Historia' declares that the story of Cuthbert's revelation is told fully elsewhere, which probably refers to the 'Historia de Sancto Cuthberto,'¹ probably written still earlier. Here the saint appears as a pilgrim on a day when Alfred and wife are left with only one attendant, the rest of the party having gone to try to catch fish for food. Alfred offers the visitor the only loaf of bread and the little wine that is left, but when the attendant expostulates the saint suddenly disappears. The others soon return with three ship-loads of fish. That night the saint appears to the sleeping King, and comforts him with the assurance of victory on the morrow. The next morning Alfred summons his forces with three blasts of his horn, and wins the subsequent battle. Still another form of the story² in a version, which, like the 'History of Cuthbert,' was probably anterior in date to Simeon of Durham, makes Alfred give a half of the loaf to the pilgrim, and states that the loaf and the wine remain miraculously undiminished after his departure. The words of the dialogue between Cuthbert and Alfred are recorded, and when the former appears in the vision he is accompanied with a wonderful light,³ while his prophecy and admonition is a lengthy one.

The 'Gesta Regum Anglorum'⁴ of William of Malmesbury (*d. 1143*) is the origin of a great fund of legendary matter in addition to the repetition of most of that which is already familiar. This author expressly declares that he does not intend to follow Alfred's career step by step, and, in accordance with his usual methods, he summarizes chief events, and interpolates additions and reflections of his own. In connection with the period of Alfred's distress it is stated that scarcely three counties retained their allegiance,—Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Somersetshire. The

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

² *Capitula de Miraculis Translationibus Sancti Cuthberti*, Arnold, vol. I, p. 230.

³ "Et, ecce! lumen, super omnem solis radium splendidus subito refulgens, totum in quo jacuit cubiculum cœlitus illustrat."

⁴ Stubbs, *Rolls Series*, 1887, vol. I, pp. 124-135.

legend of St. Cuthbert occurs in a somewhat different form from that already observed. The saint appears to the sleeping king at Athelney, and after telling who he is, announces that as England has now paid the penalty of her crimes mercy will be shown her, and Alfred restored to his throne. As a proof of his words the saint declares that the fishers who are absent will bring home a great quantity of large fish in baskets, and this in spite of the ice and cold rain which is without. The king must remember his devotion to God and the saint in the future. Meanwhile Alfred's mother has had a similar vision. The others then return with enough fish to satisfy the appetites of a numerous army.

"Not long after," continues the Chronicler, "venturing from his concealment he (Alfred) hazarded an experiment of consummate art. Accompanied only by one of his most faithful adherents, he entered the tent of the Danish king under the disguise of a mimic, and being admitted in his assumed capacity of jester, to every corner of the banqueting-room, there was no object of secrecy that he did not minutely attend to both with eyes and ears."¹ Alfred returns, and shows the ease of victory on account of the indolence of the enemy. With the aid of scouts he is then able to attack and rout the barbarians with great slaughter. The baptism follows of "Gudran, whom our people call Gurmund." Special tribute is paid to Alfred's bravery in the subsequent battles of his reign, and it told how he would singly oppose himself to the enemy. An apparently truthful touch is in the statement that the scenes of his misfortunes are still pointed out by the inhabitants. The King's sickness is declared to have been *fici*, "or some disorder of the intestines." The institution of "hundreds" and "tythings" is here first attributed to Alfred,² as well as the story common to many good rulers, of the golden bracelets hung at the

¹ Stevenson's translation, *Church Historians*, vol. III, pt. I, p. 101. "Nec multo post, ergastulum exire ausus, magnæ astutiæ periculum fecit. Regis enim Danorum, sub specie mimi, subiens tentoria, unius tantum fidelissimi fruebatur conscientia: ibi, ut joculariæ professor artis, etiam in secretiora triclinii admisus, nihil fuit arcanum quod non exciperet tum oculis tum auribus." Stubbs, I, p. 126.

² "Centurias quas dicunt hundrez et decimas thethingas vocant, instituit, ut omnis Anglus legaliter duntaxat vivens, haberet et centuriam et decimam." *Ibid.*, p. 129.

cross-roads which no one dared to steal. Alfred is mentioned as having been entertained by Grimbald when on his way as a child to Rome, and Asser is credited with particular help in explaining the 'Boethius' to the king. The author confounds John the Old-Saxon with John Scotus Erigena, a mistake frequently copied by subsequent chroniclers. Considerable attention is given to Alfred's literary works, among which is named an uncompleted translation of the Psalms; and the 'Handbook' or 'Manual' is particularly mentioned. A rumor is recorded which said that the king was first buried in the Cathedral (at Winchester), but later removed to the New Minster because of the nightly wanderings of the royal body, but the author repudiates such superstitions.

William of Malmesbury also adds an addition to the story of Ethelfleda,¹ and devotes a great deal of attention to the reigns of Edward and his son Athelstan. A legend is recorded, according to which the mother of the latter was a shepherd's daughter of exquisite beauty to whom a wonderful vision showed that she should become the mother of the king of England.² It is also related how Athelstan was knighted by his grandfather, and by him presented with a scarlet cloak, a belt studded with diamonds, and a Saxon sword with a golden scabbard.³

It is obvious from the above that to William of Malmesbury more than to any other medieval author except Asser (whom he moreover adopts *in toto*) is due the legendary figure of Alfred. Hence, as may be supposed, it is from this source that many later writers of fiction draw their inspiration, and the fact that it is untouched by the influence of the Neot legend doubtless makes it the more attractive to them.

It is not to be expected then that the other writers of the 12th century will equal this portrait of Alfred. Geffroi Gaimar (*fl.* 1140), however, devotes nearly five hundred lines of his

¹ "Quæ pro experta difficultatæ primi partus, vel potius unius, perpetuo viri complexum horruit." *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²*Ibid.*, p. 155. Of Athelstan is told a minstrel disguise story similar to that of Alfred.

³*Ibid.*, p. 145. In the *Gestum Pontificum* of William of Malmesbury many of the same incidents are recorded of Alfred's life as in his other work. There he also adds the account of Denewulf (Stubbs, Rolls Series, 1870, p. 199), and professes to quote from the *Handbook* the story of St. Eadhelm. (*Ibid.*, p. 333.)

'Lestorie des Engles'¹ to "Elveret." The wars with the Danes constitute the most part. At the close Alfred is apparently stated to have written the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:—

Il fist escrivere un livre Engleis
Des aventures, e des leis,
E de batailles de la terre,
E des reis ki firent la guere:
E maint livre fist il escrivere,
U li bon clerc vont sovent lire.

The remaining authors of this century do not give so extended notice to Alfred. Geoffrey of Monmouth² (*d. 1154*) incidentally mentions that Alfred translated the British Molumtine laws into English. Ailred of Riveaux (*d. 1166*) in his 'De Genealogia Regum Anglorum'³ presents a very pious picture of Alfred, who, with his adherents, supports life during their adversity by fishing.⁴ His address to his troops is, as Arnold observes,⁵ more that of an ecclesiastic than of a general. It is interesting to observe that because there is here the legend of Cuthbert instead of Neot the character of Alfred is religious throughout, and not only after the saint's help! It is, however, particularly mentioned that he took no share in the government of the church.

Roger of Hovenden (*fl. 1150*)⁶ also repeats the Cuthbert legend, but introduces nothing new.

With the 13th, as with the former century, appear a number of works, which mention Alfred, but none which presents so many new features. That at this time Alfred was a figure of general and popular interest is attested by the 'Brut' of Layamon, composed about the beginning of the century. Here Layamon, speaking of the British Laws of Queen Marcie, declares that after many winters came Alfred the King, "Engelondes deorling," and

¹ Hardy, Rolls Series, 1883, vol. i, pp. 126-145. The name of Ubba is supplied in line 3149, p. 132. *Vide supra*, p. 11.

² Book III, chapter v of *British History. Six Old Eng. Chronicles*, p. 126.

³ Twysden, *Historiæ Anglicanæ Scriptores Decem* (London, 1652), pp. 352-356.

⁴ "ut rex Christiannissimus fuga sibi consulens, exutus regno cum paucissimis familiarium suorum in silvis ac paludibus delitesceret ac suam suorumque vitam piscium captura transigeret." Twysden, col. 353.

⁵ *King Alfred in English Poetry*, p. 9.

⁶ "Annalium Pars Prior," Stubbs, Rolls Series, 1871, vol. i, pp. 41-50.

translated the Laws into English, changing their name from Marciane into Mærcenelaw.¹

The epithet of "England's Darling" was probably still earlier used in a work whose present form seems to date from the century now considered. The so-called 'Proverbs of Alfred'² are, however, probably derived from an Anglo-Saxon original now lost. Although Hardy has suggested that they might constitute the 'Manual' of Alfred,³ they are certainly not his work. Their importance, however, is great, as showing the widespread reputation for wisdom enjoyed by their supposed author. The Proverbs are supposed to be delivered by the king to his Witena Gemot at Seaford. He is described,—

And ek Ealured
Engelene hurde (*shepherd*)
Engelene durl yng
On Englene londe he wes kyng.

Each proverb begins, "Thus said Alfred," and they contain various admonitions to virtue, and popular sayings, such as are still familiar.

From a similar desire to attribute literary performance to Alfred may be explained the fact that he has been credited with the translation of Æsop's Fables. Thus according to certain MSS. of the 'Fables' of Marie de France, who flourished in the latter half of the 13th century, she asserts that Æsop was translated

¹ Sir F. Madden (London, 1847), vol. I, p. 269. For the statement that Alfred translated the British Laws into English, Layamon follows the '*Brut*' of Wace, which follows Geoffrey of Monmouth (*vide supra*), but he is the first to insert the account of Queen Marcia. See Madden's note, III, p. 328, and Plummer's note, p. 63. "The whole myth is due to a misunderstanding (willful, probably in the first instance) of the partial incorporation in Alfred's Laws of the *Mercian* code of Offa."

² *An Old English Miscellany*, Morris, Ear. Eng. Text Soc., 1872, pp. 102-138. Also printed in Wright's *Reliquæ Antiquæ*, 1841, I, 170; and Kemble's *Solomon and Saturn*, 1848, p. 226. Freeman, *Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1876), v, 592, says: "From the *Brut* of Layamon we turn with pleasure to the contemporary Proverbs which, by a pardonable fiction, bear the name of Alfred. If they prove nothing else, they at least prove that even then there were Englishmen by whom the name and worth of the greatest of Englishmen were not forgotten."

³ Hardy (*ut supra*), p. 555.

into English by King Alfred; but a preferable reading seems to show that the royal author's name was Henry, not Alfred.¹ Dr. Furnivall, indeed, in discussion of the source of Chaucer's 'Nuns Priest's Tale,' claims from the evidence the English origin of the Fable of the "Cock and Fox,"² but this view has not been adopted by subsequent writers.³

The most important of the contributions of the Chroniclers during this century is the extensive one by Roger de Wendover (*d.* 1236), whose work was continued by Matthew Paris (*d.* 1259), and incorporated by him in the 'Chronica Majora.'⁴ In the early part of the 15th century this account figures again in the 'Flores Historianum' of the mythical Matthew of Westminster. It may be added that Roger de Wendover himself seems indebted to an earlier chronicle compiled as far as the year 1188.

The present work depends largely upon Florence of Worcester for the portion now considered. To this is added matter from many of the chronicles already noticed, as well as several original features. For the first time, the crowning of Alfred at Rome is given as one of the reasons for Ethelbald's revolt, since the

¹ Cf. de Roquefort, *Poésies de Marie de France* (Paris, 1832), II, pp. 34 ff. The MS. readings are *Amez, Auvert, Auvres, Mires, Alurez, Affrus* and *Henris*. This editor adopts the last name, and reads (II, p. 401)

Li rois Henris qui moult l'ama
Le translata puis en Engleiz.

See also Tyrwhitt, *Canterbury Tales of Chaucer* (London, 1822), I, pp. 153-154; Pauli (ed. Thorpe), p. 189; Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, III, p. 572 and IV, p. 793; and Draper, p. 85. Gröber, *Grundriss der romanischen Philologie*, vol. II, p. 632, expresses the opinion that the Alfred mentioned by Marie was an unknown English Fable collector of the 12th century, whose name became confused with that of King Alfred. A Latin and a Dutch MS. of Æsop also refer to the translation of *King Affrus*. It is probable that Marie de France wrote *Henry* and referred to Henry I of England.

² *Originals and Analogues of Canterbury Tales* (Chaucer Society Publications), 1875, p. 115: "inasmuch as no version of Æsop containing this story has yet been found which is so early as King Alfred's time, England can, at present, show the best *primâ facie* title to the authorship of the fable."

³ It is not noticed by Skeat, *Works of Chaucer* (Oxford, 1894), vol. III, p. 431; or by Petersen, *Sources of the Nonne Prestes Tale* (Radcliffe Monographs, No. 10), Boston, 1898.

⁴ Luard, *Rolls Series*, 1872, vol. I, pp. 403-435.

latter objected that Alfred should take precedence over his brothers' sons. The story of the king's bodily troubles is curiously confused. The second ailment is described as a "desire for the joys of marriage."¹ The entry for the year 877 is worthy of notice, because it was inserted by Parker into his edition of Asser. It tells of how the Danes increased in numbers, "so that if thirty thousand were slain one day, on the next they came in doubled quantities"; and then of the building of the long-ships by Alfred, and of his manning them with pirates, and of the naval victory at Swannewich. According to the present chronicle Hinguar, Hubba, and Halden all met death at the castle of Kenwith (Cynwit.) Much attention is paid to the accounts of the battles, and the cruelty of the Danes is especially noticed. The story of Alfred in Athelney is given in full, and the island itself described. Alfred represents himself as a servant of the defeated king, and the swineherd treats him with kindness. After the scolding on account of the scorched cakes, it is related that he not only turned them, but gave them to the housewife properly cooked.² Joined by his soldiers the royal fugitive builds a fortress upon Athelney from which sallies are made upon the enemy. He pays a visit to the holy Neot, who is living a solitary life near Hamstoke; and the saint's words are given in which Alfred is severely arraigned for his pride and fiery lusts. The king promises repentance, and on the same night St. Cuthbert appears in a vision and announces that his kingdom will be restored. On waking, Alfred vows to build a monastery in the place. It will be observed that this author is the first to present the stories of both saints. After the subsequent victory Gyro (Guthrum), now baptized as Athelstan, holds East-Anglia under Alfred. Bishop Denewulf is identified with the swineherd of Athelney for the first time in the present chronicle, where we learn that "it is reported" that he was the same with whom Alfred lived for a time.³ The origin of the story has been already observed in Florence of Worcester.

¹ "Affectus scilicet nuptiarum." *Ibid.*, p. 405.

² *Ibid.*, p. 411. The verses quoted above on p. 21 are here used by the housewife.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

The sending of alms to Judea (p. 427) is due to a misreading of *Judea* for *India*. (Cf. Plummer, p. 65.)

Although he records the reproaches of Neot, Roger of Wendover describes Alfred as a kind and dutiful sovereign.¹ A great contrast is to be found in the account by John of Wallingford,² who wrote about the same time, and who reaches the extreme of depreciation of Alfred's character in order that Neot's might make the brighter contrast. There is a long extract from a Life of the saint, to which is prefixed further accounts of Alfred's sins in the early part of his reign; of how he was deserted by his followers on the invasion of the Danes, and of how even during his misfortune his character did not improve³ until he received the assistance of the saint.

The Anglo-Norman Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft⁴ (*circa 1300*) was translated by Robert Manning of Brunne⁵ (*d. 1338*). These works present some curious distortions of the facts. When Alfred, without waiting for his brother, attacks the enemy at Eschendun he is quickly defeated. Æthelred then finishes his mass and wins the victory. The older brother is also credited with the younger's interest in education, and the device for measuring time. Among Alfred's foes are mentioned Rollo, and Gunter, father of Haveloc.

The 'Chronicle' of Robert of Gloucester,⁶ which belongs to about the same time as de Langtoft's, is chiefly interesting for its explanation of the nature of Alfred's crowning at Rome. This is told as follows:

Arst he adde at Rome ybe • & uor gret wisdom •
 ðe pope leon him blessede • ðo he ðuder com •
 & ðe kinges croune of ðis lond • ðat in ðis lond gūt is •
 & elede him to be king • ar he were king ywis •
 & he was king of engelond • of alle ðat ðer com •
 ðat verst ðus yeled was • of ðe pope of rome •
 & suððe oðer after him • of ðe erchebissop echon •
 So ðat biuore him • pur king nas ðer non •

¹ "Amabilis et affabilis, jocundus, et in rerum disciplina perscrutator incomparabilis," p. 406. The words occur in a long eulogy: "De moribus et sapientia magni regis Alfredi."

² Gale, *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores Veteres*, I, pp. 535-538.

³ "Econtra virgines et castæ [vivere] volentes, suæ luxuriæ vel invitæ voluntæ subdere omni studio festinavit." *Ibid.*, p. 535.

⁴ Wright, *Rolls Series*, 1866, vol. I, pp. 316-318.

⁵ Thos. Hearne (Oxford, 1725), vol. I, p. 24.

⁶ Wright, *Rolls Series*, 1887, vol. I, pp. 387-394.

Robert also tells in his quaint style of Cuthbert, and of Alfred's Laws; while Guthrum now appears as "Gurmund."

John de Oxenedes¹ (*d. 1293*) calls Alfred the first king of all England,² but the same suggestion had already appeared in Ethelwerd.³

At this point may be mentioned two series of church annals; although it is possible that the parts here in question were composed earlier than the 13th century. The 'Annals of Winchester'⁴ give a rather brief summary of Alfred's reign, in which is mentioned his 'Proverbs' and the good order which he established through country. The 'Annals of Waverly'⁵ record nothing except the establishment of the three monasteries, and those of Dunstable only the alms sent to St. Thomas of India.⁶

We now pass to the 14th century, which is chiefly remarkable for the appearance of the legend which connects Alfred with the University of Oxford. The first occurrence of this is in a work which devotes considerable attention to Alfred's reign,⁷ *i. e.* the 'Polychronicon' of Ralph Higden (*d. 1363*), which work was subsequently translated into English by John de Trevisa (*d. 1420*).⁸ It is stated that by the advice of Abbot Neot, whom Alfred often visited, he founded common schools of various kinds at Oxford.⁹ Another new feature of this chronicle is the story that Alfred, as a child, was sent by his father to be cured by the virgin St. Modwena in Ireland. In gratitude for which Æthelwulf presents her with the land for two monasteries in England.¹⁰ Later, in the chapters devoted to Alfred proper, this is again mentioned

¹ Ellis, Rolls Series, 1859, pp. 2-5.

² "Primus prothomonarcha Angliæ."

³ *M. H. B.*, p. 514.

⁴ *Annales Monastici*, Luard, Rolls Series, 1865, vol. II, pp. 9-10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 10.

⁷ "When the supposed authority of Asser is put out of court, the Alfredian legend, even in its simplest and least elaborate form, cannot be traced further back than the *Polychronicon*." Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1895), vol. II, p. 372.

⁸ *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden . . . with the English Translations*, etc., Babington, Rolls Series, 1869, vol. VI, pp. 352-402.

⁹ "Quamobrem ad consilium Neoti abbatis, quem crebro visitaverat, scholas publicas variarum artium apud Oxoniam primus instituit; quam urbem in multis articulis privilegiari procuravit." *Ibid.*, p. 354.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

with the story of prayer to Neot. Although Neot is here named, the story of his reproofs and that of the cakes are omitted. Cuthbert appears in the guise of a pilgrim while Alfred is alone reading the scriptures and his followers are fishing. The other features of this legend follow the 'History' of the saint already noticed. The visit to the Danish camp is also told.

The so-called 'Bromton Chronicle,'¹ ascribed by one MS. to John Bromton, Abbot of Jorvaux (*fl.* 1463), is of unknown authorship, but was probably composed in the same century as the preceding work, of which it makes considerable use. Not only does Alfred found the university at the advice of Neot, but in the division of his revenues (based upon Asser's account) a fixed part goes to its maintenance.² This Chronicle tells both the story of the cakes and that of St. Cuthbert.

The 'Eulogium Historiarum,'³ which also belongs to the 14th century, repeats much of the previous account of Alfred, and adds the statement that he would never leave church before the end of mass; hence when attacked by the Danes during the service, he waited until its end and then slew King Coseg and his son.⁴ The same chronicle calls him "the most learned of Saxon poets."

A fanciful legend which attaches itself to the name of Alfred is recorded in the 'Historia Aurea' of John of Tynemouth (*fl.* 1366), who also wrote a Life St. Neot. "One day when Alfred was hunting in the forest he heard the cry of an infant, which appeared to come from a tree. He despatched his huntsmen to seek for the voice. They climbed the tree and found on the top, in an eagle's nest, a wondrously beautiful child, clothed in purple and with golden bracelets on his arms. The king commanded that it should be cared for, baptized and well educated. In remembrance of the singular discovery he caused it to be named Nestingus."⁵

¹ *Chronicon Johannis Bromton* in Twysden's *Hist. Ang. Scripts. Decem*, p. 726.

² "Tertiam scholaribus Oxoniæ noviter congregatis." *Ibid.*, col. 818.

³ Haydon, *Rolls Series*, 1863, vol. III, pp. 7-9.

⁴ "Alfredus rex hic Christianissimus pro nulla re voluit exire ante finem missæ; unde quadam die dum Danenses infestarent eum, et ipse noluit exire ante missam, missa completa exiens cum paucis occidit regem Coseg cum lancea, et filium regis cum gladio, et alii corruerunt." *Ibid.*, II, p. 188.

⁵ Pauli (ed. Thorpe, p. 164), who refers to "Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, I, 256, ed. I from the *Historia Aurea* of John Tinemuth, ms. in *Bibl. Bodl.*, lib. 21, cap. 117."

The 'Speculum Historiale'¹ of Richard of Cirencester (*d. 1400*) gives a full account of Alfred's reign. New features are the achievement of the victory at Kynwyh (Cynwit), over Hyngnar and Halfdene, by Alfred in person, and the discussion as to whether the regalia of the Kings of England was first brought from Rome by Alfred or Edward I. The eulogy in verse of Henry of Huntingdon is here declared to have been the epitaph upon Alfred's tomb at Winchester.

In addition to the chroniclers of the 14th century may be mentioned a writer upon law whose contribution is as fictitious as any of the preceding legends. Andrew Horne (*d. 1328*), in the 'Mirror of Justices,'² tells how "King Alfred in one year had forty-four judges hanged as homicides for their false judgments." The name and offence of each judge follows. The names are selected at the author's fancy, and are often very unsuitable to the time.³

The 15th century brings us to the last of the medieval writers concerned with Alfred. Mr. Plummer observes that "where . . . the growth of legend does not appear in later chronicles, we seem to come into a land where all things are forgotten."⁴ It is true that no new legends make their appearance in the century to be considered, and that the account of Alfred is often absurdly restricted; yet it must be admitted the attention given to him is sufficient to claim that his character never ceased to be an important one in the popular conception.

Deserving the first mention is the 'Historia' of Ingulf,⁵ which purports to be the work of an Abbot of Croyland in the 11th century, but is now believed to be a forgery composed at the beginning of the 15th.⁶ When this work was credited with the

¹ Mayor, Rolls Series, 1869, vol. II, pp. 3-49.

² *Selden Society Publications*, vol. VII, pp. 166-171.

³ *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. xxvii.

⁴ P. 67. "Alfred's fame was in after times largely obscured by that of Edgar. The connexion of the latter with the monastic revival secured him the homage of monastic historians, and his imperial position appealed more to the imagination of posterity than the weightier achievements of Alfred."

⁵ Fulman, *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptorum Veterum* (Oxford, 1684), Tom. I, pp. 25-28.

⁶ Cf. Riley, *Archæological Journal*, 1862, vol. XIX, pp. 32-49 and 113-133.

earlier date it was quoted—by Pauli for instance—as the source of several of the legends, which have been considered above in various chronicles. Thus the elaborate story of Cuthbert is similar to that of Higden's 'Polychronicon.' In the account of Alfred's minstrel disguise it is expressly stated that he took with him his harp.¹ A great deal is told of the oppression by Ceolwulf,² and this traitor finally meets death at the hands of his former supporters, the Danes. Alfred is said to have divided into three parts of eight hours each, for the purposes of religion, business and rest. Grimbald is named as a highly-skilled musician, and Asker (*sic*) as Abbot of Bangor. Bishop Werferth becomes St. Werferth, to whom with St. Neot, Alfred offers prayers.

The 'Liber de Hyda,'³ a monastic chronicle which seems to have been composed about the beginning of this century, although it may contain reconstruction of older material, devotes considerable space to Alfred's reign. The elaboration of monastic fiction has here reached an extreme disregard of fact, shown particularly in the accounts of Bishop Grimbald and Oxford.

Alfred meets Grimbald on his childhood's visit to Rome. Later he sends an embassy to beg him to come to England. A long letter in this regard is quoted, written to Alfred by Fulco, Archbishop of Rheims. There is a description of an ecclesiastical meeting at London, and a long speech, there delivered by Grimbald, is recorded in full. At the end of this the people, "who had before called Grimbald a reprobate and ungodly man, hastened to do him penance." The words of Alfred addressed to the judges and recorded by Asser, here appear in distorted form as if addressed to the assembly of churchmen.

The account of Oxford is even more imaginative, for it is said to have been founded in 886, the second year after Grimbald's arrival in England. The faculty are recorded as Neot and Grimbald in theology, Asser in grammar and rhetoric, John of St. David's (*sic*) in logic, music, and arithmetic, and John, a

¹ "Assumpta cithera, tentoria Danorum adiit." Fulman, p. 26.

² Elaborated from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

³ Edwards, Rolls Series, 1866, pp. 28-51.

colleague of Grimbold, in geometry and astronomy.¹ All of the lectures took place in the presence of Alfred, "whose memory will dwell like honey upon the lips of all." As might be supposed the 'Book of Hyde' makes full use of the usual legends as well.

The Oxford legend is even further amplified in the 'Historia Regum Angliæ' of John Rous or Ross² (*d. 1491*). According to this author the town of Oxford was founded by King Numpric, but the university by Alfred. The latter, moreover, started three colleges; the "parva aula universitatis" for grammar, the "minora aula universitatis" for dialectics and philosophy, and a third hall for theology. Each of these was to be attended by twenty-six students. But this legend which attributed the founding of University College, Oxford, to Alfred, and which is merely extended by Rous, was in existence more than a century before.³

Rous refers to the 'Historia Major Wintoniensis' of Thomas Rudborne, or Radburn (*fl. 1460*).⁴ The latter states that Æthelweard, Alfred's youngest son, was a learned man and philosopher at Oxford. In regard to the University itself, it is only mentioned that it was founded by Alfred, but the influence of this tradition makes the swineherd Denewlph (Denewulf) first become Doctor of Theology at Oxford, previous to being Bishop of Winchester.⁵

The 'Chronicle of England' of John Capgrave⁶ (*d. 1464*) has the following entry regarding Alfred: "In this tyme regned Alured in Ynglond, the fourt son of Adelwold. He began to regn in the zere of our Lord 872. This man, be the councele of St. Ned, mad an open Scole of divers sciens at Oxenford.

¹ "in theologia legentibus sancto Neotho, abbate necnon in theologia doctore egregio; et sancto Grimbaldo, sacræ paginæ suavissimæ dulcedinis excellentissimo professore. In grammatica vero et rhetorica regente Assero, . . . In dialecticia vero, musica, arithmetica, legente Johanne, monacho Menevensis ecclesiæ," etc. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

² Thos. Hearne (Oxford, 1745), 2d ed., p. 76 ff.

³ Cf. Parker, *The Early History of Oxford*, (Oxf. Hist. Soc. 1885), p. 53.

⁴ Wharton, *Anglia Sacra* (London, 1691), vol. I, pp. 206-208.

⁵ "Hic Alfredus quendam Subulcum, nomine Denewlphum, inveniens, ad scholâs misit; qui postmodum Doctor in Theologia Oxoniis factus, per ipsum Alfredum Regem in Episcopum Wyntoniensem ordinatus est."

⁶ Higeston, *Rolls Series*, 1858, p. 113. Alfred's mother is here the daughter of Charles the Bald.

He had many batailes with Danes; and aftir many conflictes in which he had the wers, at the last he ovircam hem; and be his trefy Godrus here king was baptized, and went hom with his puple. XXVIII ȝere he regned, and deied the servaunt of God."

In contrast to this brief account is the rimed 'Chronicle' of John Hardyng¹ (*d. 1465*) which goes into much detail in recounting Alfred's story. The stay in Denwulf's cottage is told in the following verse:

In Denwolfes house thoxherd of the towne
So was he then in [poore & symple] aray,
Where Denwolf cladde him in his owne gowne,
And tender was to him there alwaye,
[But hys wyfe made him to laboure aye]
Wyth bakying and with bruyng wonder sore
In water beryng she made [him] worke ever more.

Later in regard to Denwulf, after the defeat of the Danes, it is told:

His wyfe was deed, and somewhat was he letred.
At his desyre the kyng set him to lerne,
To tyme that he was wise and mekell betred,
In holy wryt that he coude well discerne;
And then the kyng made hym byshop as yerne,
Of Winchester, when Dunbert there so dyed,
That bishop was afore him sacrafied.

A curious blending of legends makes Marinus, the Pope, grant leave to Alfred to found Oxford. Alfred's compilation of laws is remarkable:

King Alurede the lawes of Troye and Brute
Lawes Moluntynes and Marcians congregate,
With Danyshe lawes that were well constytute,
And Grekyshe also well mad and approbate.

All of these he translated into English. This author testifies to the conception of Alfred retained at the time, when he calls him "a perfect clerk;" notes that he always "bore himself well" in battles; and declares that he "kept the land from shame."

Another late chronicler, whose account though often faulty

¹ Henry Ellis (London, 1812), pp. 199-206.

contains considerable description of Alfred, is Robert Fabyan¹ (*d. 1513*). He omits the story of St. Neot and the cakes, although that of St. Cuthbert is given. After the mention of wars and pestilences the author adds: "whiche trowbles & adversyties natwithstandynge he knyghtly & manfully resysted the malyce of his enemyes, & thanked God alwaye, what trowble so ever fyll to hym or to his realme, & susteyned it with great humylyte & pacyence."

From the above it appears that a number of legendary additions have been joined to the original story of Alfred as it stands in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and in the uncontaminated Life by Asser. Briefly stated these are as follows: The stories which tell of the help afforded by St. Neot and St. Cuthbert, of which the former also recounts Alfred's bad conduct, and the legend which has grown most prominently connected with his name; the story of Denewulf; the disguise by means of which Alfred enters the Danish camp; his institution of tythings and hundreds; the translation of the British Laws; and, finally, the foundation of Oxford. Less important traditions also testify to the prominence of the character with which they are connected, but are less enduringly associated with it. Of the legendary additions named nearly all have been amplified by later writers, and many have been curiously interconnected; so that Denewulf, who is first a swineherd, educated by Alfred, and raised to the Bishopric of Winchester, later becomes identified with the cowherd in whose hut Alfred takes shelter, and, finally, even teaches theology for a time at Oxford. The Oxford legend was particularly the subject of elaboration, and from the interest which its proof of the university's antiquity aroused in the scholars, exercised considerable influence on the position of Alfred's figure.

Enough has been said to show the amount of poetic tradition from which later writers of fiction were enabled to draw, as well as to show how this has been elaborated from the real Alfred of history, or added thereto with no true historical basis.

¹ Henry Ellis (London, 1811), pp. 165-170.

BIOGRAPHY.

In several previous passages there has been occasion to refer to the *editio princeps* of Asser's Life of Alfred, which was published by Archbishop Matthew Parker in 1574. Parker, as is well known, possessed an enthusiastic interest in the early literature of his country. In addition to the first editions of the 'Flores Historiarum,' of Gildas, Nennius, and other works, he had already published the Anglo-Saxon Gospels. His biographer Strype relates how he "laboured to forward the composing and publishing of a Saxon Dictionary."¹ The same authority states that the 'Asser' appeared in November, 1774—only a few months before its editor's death—and that "of this edition of 'Asserius' there had been great expectation among the learned."² The 'Ælfrēdi Regis Res Gestæ, auctore Asserio' is contained in a folio volume, which owes its thickness chiefly to the 'Historia' of Thomas of Walsingham. A Preface to the 'Asser' is of importance for what Parker says in regard to the MS. used, and his method of editing it. After a eulogy of Alfred, the editor declares that he uses the Anglo-Saxon characters in which the 'Asser' is printed, out of reverence for the archetype or very ancient MS. copied,³ and, finally, makes a declaration of the exact method in which all works are edited by him. In proof of the last statement Parker asserts that he places the originals of all such works in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where his publications may be compared with the MSS. themselves.

Parker seems to mean that he has published an old MS. of 'Asser' without addition, or change of any kind. In the light of our present knowledge this is not credible. The MS. which Parker used was unfortunately destroyed in the disastrous fire of the Cotton Library, but not until a careful copy had been made of it by Francis Wise. From the evidence of this edition, and

¹ *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker* (Oxford, 1821), vol. II, p. 514. The first edition of this work appeared in 1711.

² *Ibid.*, p. 380.

³ "Saxonice literis excudi curavimus, maxime ob venerandum ipsius archetypum antiquitatem." In the Preface Parker also speaks of having had the type cut in brass for this purpose.

of the late MSS. now extant, it appears certain that Parker interpolated certain passages in the text of the old MS.¹ The nature of these interpolations has been already discussed under the accounts of the 'Pseudo-Asser' and of Roger of Wendover. It has been seen that from the former Parker adopted the mention of the famines; the Raven standard; the account of St. Neot, and the stay in the cowherd's hut; and the notice of Alfred's death. From the 'Flores Historiarum' Parker takes only the account of the building of the long-ships, told for the year 877. In extenuation of Parker's conduct it must be mentioned that it is possible that he was deceived by the scholars whom he employed;² that he probably considered the spurious Annals a real work of Asser's; and, finally, that the standard of his time was, in such matters, a different one from that of the present.³

But such excuses are of no avail for the interpolation which distinguishes the next edition of the text, which was published by the antiquarian William Camden in 1603.⁴ The one passage upon which the interest of this work rests, had already made its appearance, three years before, in the 'Britannia' of the same author. This passage tells how a dispute arose between Grimbald and the other learned men at the University of Oxford in regard to the respective merits of the old methods of instruction, and those which he introduced.⁵ Incidentally statutes were appealed to, which showed the great antiquity of the university. Alfred was called upon to settle the dispute, which ended by Grimbald leaving Oxford for Winchester.

With the exception of this passage Camden's 'Asser' is merely

¹ For the discussion of this question cf. *M. H. B.*, Preface, pp. 79-81; and Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue*, vol. I, pt. II, pp. 549-553. Of the three existing MSS., none of which is older than the sixteenth century, two seem to have been copied from the old Cotton MS. Otho A. XII.; and one is a mere transcript of Parker's edition. In the manuscript volume at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, which contains one of the first two, is also the *Pseudo-Asser* separated from it by only a few pages. Moreover notes in Parker's handwriting relative to Alfred appear on these pages.

² Cf. Madden, *Matthew Paris*, Rolls Series, 1866, vol. I, Preface, p. XXXVII.

³ Cf. Parker, *The Early History of Oxford* (Oxford Hist. Soc., 1885), p. 45.

⁴ Printed in *Anglica . . . a veteribus scripta*. Frankfort. fol.

⁵ *M. H. B.*, p. 489 ff. Wise, p. 52 ff.

a reprint of Parker's edition, and nothing is said as to the use of any other MS. Later Camden claimed that this insertion was taken from a Saville MS., which, however, according to his own account was no earlier than the time of Richard II, and which has never been since discovered.¹ In the 'Britannia' the Oxford passage was introduced in connection with the account of Grimbold and Oxford given by the 'Book of Hyde,' by which it was doubtless suggested. The motive for its invention is obvious in the rival claims for antiquity, which were so frequently advanced by Oxford and Cambridge.²

It was not until more than a hundred years after the work just considered that the text of the Life of Alfred first found an honest editor. This was Francis Wise, whose edition of 1722³ has been the means of preserving the authentic text, since as has been already indicated, the old Cotton MS. which forms the basis of this text, was destroyed nine years afterwards. Wise noted the variations of Parker's and Camden's editions, and of two existing MSS. of a later date. He also published a fac-simile of the beginning of the old Cotton MS. by means of which its age has been estimated. It is unnecessary to draw attention to the great debt owed to Wise for thus preserving the correct form of Asser's life. From the facts already stated it is apparent that the text of Wise must be the basis of all subsequent editions. Of these reference has been already made to that in the 'Monumenta Historica Britannica,' and to that which is shortly to appear from the hands of Mr. W. H. Stevenson.

¹ Cf. *M. H. B.*, Preface, p. 79, note 8. In the *Britannia* Camden had merely stated that the passage was "ex optimo exemplari Asserii." Even the style of the Latin shows that it does not belong to the text.

² Parker, *Early History of Oxford*, in Chap. II, "The Mythical History of Oxford," traces the whole of this dispute including the part played by the Alfredian legend, and the important contribution of Camden, which aroused such fierce discussion.

³ *Annales rerum gestarum Ælfredi Magni, auctore Asserio Menevensi*. Oxford. 8°

In addition to the text this volume contains: A statement of the MSS. which the author has consulted; a discussion of Asser, and his writings; the Preface to Parker's edition; a list of the tributes paid by various writers to Alfred; a chronology of his life; the supposed letter from Fulco to Alfred (noticed above under the *Book of Hyde*); and an *Apologia* for Camden's Oxford passage, which Wise considers genuine.

Three Lives of Alfred had been published before the appearance of the edition of 'Asser' by Wise. The first of these modern biographies is a curious little volume which bears the following title: 'The Life of Alfred or Alured: The first Institutor of subordinate government in this Kingdome and Refounder of the University of Oxford. Together with a Parallell of our Sovereigne Lord K[ing] Charles untill this yeare, 1634. By Robert Powell of Wels, one of the Society of New-Inne.'¹

Pauli dismisses this work with the words: "the title . . . is sufficient to show in what spirit it was written and what may be learnt from it."² Yet in view of its early date the author deserves some credit for his interest in "the studie of our British, Saxon, and English Histories," in regard to which he regrets that "many . . . are more conversant in Turkish and other forraigne histories than in our owne." This author gives the chief facts, and traditions connected with Alfred's Life, such as the journey to Rome, the retirement to Athelney, and the victory over Guthrum.³ Of course Oxford occupies a prominent position. "For the perpetuall propagation of learning, he (Alfred) revived and repaired the old, and erected and endowed new schools, and colledges, as so many seed plots, and nurseries of Religion and virtue. Some write that he did first institute the University of Oxford: the institution of that famous Achademie was doubtless long before." Yet the author concludes that Alfred deserves as much honor as the refounder as does the original founder himself. The second part of this work traces a close parallel between Alfred, and Charles I. After showing the numerous similarities the author states: "I have now presented to your favourable view, a paire of Peerelesse Princes, who for their religion, piety, devotion, institution and renovation of good lawes, government, justice, mercy, truth, meeknesse, temperance, patience, abstinence, conjugall castimony, and all other virtues may be presidents of imitation to all princes and people."

¹ Printed by Richard Badger for Thomas Alchorn and to be sold at the signe of the green-Dragon in Paul's Church-yard. 1634. 16°

² (ed. Thorpe), p. 14.

³ In the margins are references to the works of Holinshed, Twine, Lewis, Speed, Lamb, and Camden, as well as to Asser.

Showing vastly more research than the preceding, but with scarcely more critical value is the Life compiled by Sir John Spelman (*d.* 1643), son of the more famous Sir Henry Spelman. This work was translated into Latin in 1677 by members of University College,¹ under direction of Obadiah Walker, and published in the next year.² In 1709 the well-known antiquary Thomas Hearne published the original Life as it was first written in English by Spelman.³ This edition also contained additional notes by Hearne himself.

These volumes represent enormous industry and wide reading on the part of the original author and his subsequent editors.⁴ But there is no sense of the comparative value of the authorities

¹ It is so stated in the volume itself, but the translation seems to have been the work of Christopher Wase (*d.* 1690).^a See his Life in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

² *Ælfredi Magni Anglorum Regis invictissimi vita tribus libris comprehensa.* Oxford, 1678.

This folio is dedicated to Charles II, between whom and Alfred a number of points of resemblance are discovered. There are several engravings, the first of which shows the buildings of University College. Seven *Appendices*, and numerous notes were added to Spelman's original work by Walker. Partly because of these notes he narrowly escaped a summons to appear before the House of Commons, since in them "he had expressed himself very popishly affected." (Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, ed. Bliss, iv, 438.) For Walker's subsequent adoption of catholicism and ultimate fate cf. *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

³ *The Life of Alfred the Great by Sir John Spelman from the original manuscript in the Bodleian Library.* Oxford. 12°

⁴ The story of Alfred had, of course, been repeated by the historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries before the appearance of Spelman's biography, and frequent references are made to these authors as well as to the early chroniclers. Among the writers who occupy this intermediary position may be mentioned Stowe, Holinshed, Polydore Vergil, and Nicholas Harpsfield. Reference may also be made here to the accounts of Alfred contained in four famous biographical collections of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. The most important of these, and the one to which the others are for the most part indebted, is Leland, *Commentarii de scriptoribus Britannicis* (edition of Hall, Oxford, 1709), vol. i, pp. 144-153. This is adopted with the addition of notes by Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica* (London, 1748), pp. 31-35. Shorter, and less accurate are the accounts of Bale, *Scriptorum Illustrium Majoris Britannicæ* (Basle, 1557), p. 125, and Pits, *De illustribus Angliæ Scriptoribus* (Paris, 1619), p. 169. Pits follows Bale closely. Both are noticeable for the number of works ascribed to Alfred, among which appear *Contra judices iniquos* and *Parabolas et sales*. Leland (*d.* 1552) seems to have been the first to give Alfred the title of Magnus.

quoted. Later works such as the 'Book of Hyde,' the 'Bromton Chronicle,' and the 'Historia' of John Rous are referred to as of equal value with Asser. Indeed particular attention is given to such late compilations as in these are found the legends of particular interest to the biographers. Spelman seems to have been led to write the 'Life of Alfred' chiefly to show that by him Oxford was founded, and an elaborate discussion of the question is presented. Walker's notes attempted to prove that University College particularly was started by Alfred. Hearne, finally, disputes the reasoning of Spelman, and believes that Oxford long antedated the subject of the biography. There is but little new matter which requires attention. The institution of trial by jury is, however, first ascribed to Alfred by Spelman, and has since then become one of the most popular of traditions.¹

In spite of the uncritical nature of these two volumes their importance in collecting together all matter relating to Alfred's history, and the presentation of it in so imposing a manner must not be forgotten. Spelman's *Life* continued for a long time the established authority upon the subject, and as such was naturally consulted by later writers of fiction.

The subsequent biographies of Alfred need not here be considered at any length. That of Bicknell² is merely a recasting of portions of the volumes just considered. Two German works—of Albrecht von Haller and Stolberg—will be more suitably noticed from the point of view of fiction. The *Life* by Giles,³ which appeared shortly before that of Pauli,⁴ is justly condemned by the latter. It was not until that author's biography that the subject

¹ Edition of 1678, p. 71.

Spelman also repeats, what Parker mentions in his Preface, that according to the *Historia Eliensis* Alfred translated both the Old and New Testaments. The *Historia* as printed by Gale (*ut supra*), vol. I, p. 463 ff., does not contain this passage. Cf. Pauli (ed. Thorpe), p. 187.

² *The Life of Alfred the Great, King of the Anglo-Saxons*. By A. Bicknell, Author of the History of Edward the Black Prince, Philosophical Disquisitions on the Christian Religion, &c. (London, 1777).

³ *The Life and Times of Alfred the Great* (London, 1848).

⁴ *König Ælfred und seine Stelle in der Geschichte Englands*. (Berlin, 1851.) Two English translations followed. *Life of King Alfred* . . . Translation revised by the author. Edited by T. Wright, (London, 1852); and that by B. Thorpe, *Bohn's Antiquarian Library*. 1853.

was treated in a scholarly manner, and so thoroughly was this done that all subsequent writers upon Alfred's history must find themselves in debt to it. The method of its presentation is perhaps less acceptable than its thoroughness, and there is more reliance placed upon the text of Asser than it always deserves, but, when all is said, its appearance must be conceded as one of the most important additions to all the literature concerning Alfred.

Since then there has been, as the following List shows, no lack of Lives of Alfred, but the majority of these are of a very popular and unpretentious character. It is also obvious that the interest aroused by the thousandth anniversary of Alfred's death, in October 1901, was the inspiration of a number of volumes. To several of these allusion has been already made. Particular mention should also be made of the volume of Essays¹ bearing upon different sides of Alfred's character, which was especially connected with the observance of the anniversary alluded to. In most of the numerous Lives there is no attempt to do anything but tell the story of Alfred's Life in an interesting and popular manner, and an appeal to younger readers is evident in many of the titles. As has been already stated, the work of Mr. Plummer with the forth-coming edition of 'Asser,' by Mr. Stevenson, mark the latest scholarship upon the subject.

*Lives of King Alfred.*²

Parker, Matthew, *Ælfredi Regis Res Gestæ, auctore Asserio* (London, 1574).

Camden, William, *De Ælfredi Rebus Gestis*. In *Anglica*, etc. (Frankfort, 1603).

Powell, Robert, *The Life of Alfred or Alured* (London, 1634).

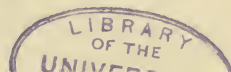
¹ *Alfred the Great*, containing Chapters on his Life and Times. Edited with a Preface by Alfred Bowker, Mayor of Winchester (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1899). The Contents are as follows: "Introduction," by Sir Walter Besant; "Alfred as King," by Frederic Harrison; "Alfred as a Religious Man and an Educationalist," by the Bishop of Bristol; "Alfred as a Warrior," by Charles Oman; "Alfred as a Geographer," by Sir Clements Marham; "Alfred as a Writer," by Rev. John Earle; "English Law before the Norman Conquest," by Sir Frederick Pollock; and "Alfred and the Arts," by Rev. W. J. Loftie. The volume is also headed with a poem by Alfred Austin.

² For the most part only works of a biographical nature are here included. For this reason I have omitted certain volumes which concern Alfred, such as Earle, *The Alfred Jewel* (Oxford, 1901); Stevenson, *The Date of King Alfred's Death* (Reprinted for private circulation from *The English Historical Review*,

- Spelman, Henry, *Ælfredi Magni Vita* (Oxford, 1678).
 —, *The Life of Alfred the Great . . .* with additions by Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1709).
 Wise, Francis, *Annales rerum gestarum Ælfredi Magni* (Oxford, 1722).
 Haller, Albrecht von, *Alfred, König der Angel-Sachsen* (Göttingen and Bern, 1773).
 —, *Alfred, Roi des Anglo-Saxons*. Traduit de l'Allemand (Lausanne, 1775).
 [Also see English translation below.]
 Bicknell, Alexander, *Life of Alfred the Great* (London, 1777).
 Ryland, J., *The Life and Character of Alfred the Great* (London, 1784).
 Stolberg, F. L. von, *Das Leben Alfreds des Grossen* (Münster, 1815 and 1836).
 Lorenz, F., *Geschichte Alfreds des Grossen übertragen aus Turners Geschichte der Angelsachsen* (Hamburg, 1828).
 Durham, S. A., *Alfred the Great*. In *Lives of the most eminent literary and scientific men of Great Britain* (1836).
 S, A. M., *Stories about Alfred the Great for . . . children* (Dublin, 1840?).
 Wright, Thomàs, "Alfred" in *Biographia Britannica Literaria* (London, 1842).
 R, J. F., *Life of Alfred the Great*. In *Lives of Englishmen*, Series IV. Burns' Fireside Library (London, 1845).
 Petrie and Sharpe, *Annales rerum gestarum Ælfredi Magni*. In *Monumenta Historica Britannica* (London, 1848).
 Giles, J. A., *The Life and Times of Alfred the Great* (London, 1848).
 Steinitz, Francis, *The Moderate Monarchy or Principles of the British Constitution . . .* from the German of Albert v. Haller (London, 1849).
 Abbot, Jacob, *The History of King Alfred of England*. Histories for the Young. (New York, 1849).
 —, *The Same* (London and Edinburgh, 1883, and London, 1899).
 Pauli, Reinhold, *König Aelfred und seine Stelle in der Geschichte Englands* (Berlin, 1851).
Alfred the Great. In *Lives of Illustrious Men*. Nelson's British Library (London and Edinburgh, 1851).
 Pauli, Reinhold, *The Life of King Alfred*. Edited by T. Wright (London, 1852).
 —, *The Life of Alfred the Great*. Translation by B. Thorpe. Bohn's Antiquarian Library (London, 1852).
 Weiss, J. B., *Geschichte Alfredes des Grossen* (Schaffhausen, 1852).
 Stevenson, J., "Annals of Asser." In *Church Historians of England* (London, 1853).
 Guizot, M. G., *Alfred le Grand, ou l'Angleterre sous les Anglo-Saxons* (Paris, 1856 and 1896).
 —, Another edition "with grammatical and historical notes by H. Lallemand" (London, 1878).

London, 1898); as well as the numerous works which have appeared upon the writings of Alfred. An account of the latter may be found in Plummer, *Life and Times of Alfred the Great*. Of the recent Lives, in addition to those which have been already particularly noticed, that of Macfayden is the longest, and most elaborately written. Of those of a simpler and more concise nature, the works of Bosworth, and of Hawkins and Smith, are among the best.

- Great and Good, or Alfred the Father of his People.* Preface by G. S. Smith (London, 1864).
- Giles, J. A., "Annals of the reign of Alfred" (i. e. Asser's) in *Six Old English Chronicles.* Bohn's Antiquarian Library (London, 1866).
- Hughes, Thomas, *Alfred the Great. A biography* (London, 1869 and 1881. Boston, 1890).
- The History of King Alfred the Great,* compiled by a classical scholar, etc. (Westbury, Wilts, 1871).
- Knight, A. G., *The Life of King Alfred the Great* (London, 1880).
- Smith, Goldwin, "Alfredus rex fundator" in *Lectures and Essays* (Toronto, 1881).
- Freeman, E. A., "Ælfred" in the *Dictionary of National Biography.* 1885.
- Askin, Paul, *Four Lectures on Four Great Rulers.* (William III, Cromwell, Elizabeth and Alfred). (Dublin, 1893).
- Holt, Emily S., "Life of Alfred" in *Lights in the Darkness* (London, 1896).
- Harrison, Frederic, *The Millenary of King Alfred.* Address delivered at Birmingham the 18th October, 1897 (Printed in 1899).
- Burrows, Montague, *King Alfred the Great.* Christian Knowledge Society (London, 1898).
- Besant, Walter, *King Alfred the Great.* Lecture delivered at Winchester, Feb. 18th, 1898 (London, 1898).
- Cooke, J. H., *Life of King Alfred the Great* (London, 1899).
- Bowker, Alfred, *Alfred the Great,* containing Chapters on his Life and Times. Preface by Alfred Bowker (London, 1899).
- Conybeare, J. W. E., *Alfred in the Chronicles* (London, 1900).
- Hawkins, W. and Smith, E. T., *The Story of Alfred the Great* (London, 1900).
- Page, Jesse, *Alfred the Great* (London, 1900).
- Harrison, Frederic, "The Millenary of King Alfred" and "The Writings of King Alfred" in *George Washington and other American Addresses* (New York, 1901).
- , *The Writings of King Alfred* (New York, 1901).
- Draper, W. H., *Alfred the Great, A Sketch and Seven Studies* (London, 1901).
- Engström, C. L., *The Millenary of Alfred the Great, A Sermon* (London, 1901).
- Besant, Walter, *The Story of King Alfred.* Library of Useful Stories (New York, 1901).
- Macfayden, Dugald, *Alfred the West Saxon King of the English.* Saintly Lives (London and New York, 1901).
- Bosworth, G. F., *Alfred the Great, His Life and Times* (London and New York, 1901).
- Jeffery, F. B., *A Perfect Prince, The Story of England a thousand years ago* (London, 1901).
- Was Alfred King of England?* By a Saxon (London, 1901).
- Watson, A. B., *A Royal Lineage* (Richmond, Va., 1901).
- Primrose, A. P., *Alfred the Truth-teller.* Speech delivered at the unveiling of the statue at Winchester, Sept. 20, 1901.
- Plummer, Charles, *The Life and Times of Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1902).
- Bowker, Alfred, *The King Alfred Millenary,* a record of the proceedings of the national commemoration (London and New York, 1902).
- Stevenson, W. H., *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1902).



ALFRED OF FICTION.

EARLY WORKS.¹

BALLAD OF 'THE SHEPHERD AND THE KING.'

The first known form of fiction founded upon the subject of Alfred is a ballad which belongs to the end of the sixteenth century.² It exists now as a broad-side in the Roxburghe Collection in the British Museum, and is reprinted in 'The Roxburghe Ballads.'³ The title is as follows: 'The Shepheard and the King, and of Gillian, the Shepheard's Wife with her Churlish answers: being full of mirth and merry pastime. To the tune of Flying Fame.' This ballad consists of thirty-two eight-lined stanzas, and is divided into two parts. Two coarse wood-cuts precede Part One. In the first the King stands crowned, and with staff in hand, in front of the shepherd who sits holding his crook. In the second the King is dropping his staff. There are sheep in the background of both cuts. A single wood-cut at the head of Part Two shows Alfred leaning forward, staff still in hand, to pick the dough from the fire while, opposite, Gillian is brandishing a stick above his head.

A general idea of the style of the whole may be obtained from the two opening stanzas:

¹ It is most convenient so to group the four works first considered, which precede the numerous dramas, epics, and other productions since the middle of the eighteenth century.

² Its earliest known date of publication is 1578. Cf. Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Boston, pt. ix, p. 73. Was this production affected by the appearance of Parker's *Asser* four years earlier?

³ Edited by William Chappell (Hertford, 1880), vol. III, p. 211. Here, and in Child's *Ballads*, references are given to its publication in the earlier collections of Pepys, Euing, and Evans.

An elder time then was so yore,
when gybes of churlish glee
Were us'd amongst our country carles,
though no such thing now be :
The which King Alfred liking well,
forsooke his stately Court,
And, in disguise unknowne, went forth
to see that joviall sport ;

How Dick and Tom, in clouted shoone
and coats of russet gray,
Esteem'd themselves more brave th(a)n those
that went in golden ray.
In garments fit for such a life
our good King Alfred went,
All rag'd and torne, as from his backe
the beggar his clothes had rent.

Alfred, "coasting through Somersetshire," meets "near New-Court" a shepherd, and agrees to fight with him for the latter's dinner and bottle. After the contest has lasted for four hours, without advantage on either side, Alfred calls "King's truce." When the shepherd expresses his suspicion that the other is a robber, the disguised King denies it, declaring that he is "a gentleman . . . well known in good King Alfred's court." The shepherd continues sceptical, but proposes that the stranger return home with him. Alfred agrees to enter his service, receiving a penny as earnest money, while his wages are to be "ten groats for service of a year." The first part ends with the description of the return to the shepherd's dwelling, where "Old Gillian" greets Alfred with the words: "Whom have you here? . . . A fellow I doubt will cut our throats, so like a knave looks he!"

The second part begins with Alfred's conciliatory answer to the preceding, and then gives the story of the cakes.

Her churlish usage pleas'd him still,
but put him to such prooffe
That he that night was almost choakt
within that smoakie rooffe.

But as he sate with smiling cheere,
 the event of all to see,
 His dame brought forth a piece of dowe
 which in the fire throwes she.

Where, lying on the harth to bake,
 by chance the cake did burne—
 “What! canst thou not, thou lout,” quoth she,
 “take paines the same to turne?
 Thou art more quick to rake it out,
 and eat it up, half dowe,
 Then thus to stay till’t be enough :
 and so thy manners show.

But serve mee such another tricke,
 Ile thwack thee on the snout !”
 Which made the patient King, good man,
 of her to stand in doubt.

When Alfred retires to rest he lies upon new-pulled wool ; over his head hang spider-webs, while cackling geese and hens roost at his bed-side. He decides to leave as soon as day dawns.

Then up got Alfred, with his horne,
 and blew so long a blast,
 That [it] made Gillian and her groomè,
 in bed full sore agast.

Gillian, in great fear, exclaims that he will cut their throats, and is now calling his mates. Alfred continues to blow his horn until “a hundred lords and knights” alight at the door, declaring that they have long sought him. The shepherd and his wife are in terror lest they should be punished for the treatment of their guest, and beg forgiveness of their sovereign.

“It shall be done,” said Alfred, straight ;
 “and Gillian, my old dame,
 For this thy churlish using me
 deserveth not much blame :

For 'tis thy country guise, I see,
to be thus bluntish still ;
And where the plainest meaning is
remains the smallest ill."

Alfred further promises the shepherd a thousand wethers, and pasture sufficient to feed them, while his cottage shall be changed into a stately hall. The shepherd, for his part, declares that he will bring the King a milk-white lamb every year, and that Gillian will, every new-year's tide, bring ten groats of "wool to make your coats." The shepherd's bag-pipe shall sound in praise of Alfred, and the poem ends with the latter's words.

"Thanks, shepherd, thanks," quoth he againe,
"the next time I come hither,
My lords with me, here in this house,
will all be merry together."

The above marks in an interesting manner a popular acquaintance with certain facts of Alfred's story, and points to him as an acceptable heroic figure of the time. It might at first be supposed that there are here a number of incidents taken from the earlier writers upon Alfred's history. Such incidents are the disguise, the wandering through Somerset, the burnt cakes, the summoning of the followers by a blast of the horn, and, lastly, it might be supposed that the reward of the shepherd reflects the story of Denewulf. It must, however, be remembered that, in the words of Child, "next to the adventures of Robin Hood and his men, the most favorite topic in English popular poetry is the chance encounter of a King, unrecognized as such, with one of his humble subjects."¹ Such stories are related of Edward I, III, and IV, of Henry II, and VIII, as well as of Charles the Great, and other continental monarchs. Child mentions the Alfred ballad among a number of analogues of 'King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tamworth,'² and also notes its agreements—sometimes verbal—with

¹ Child, *Ballads*, pt. ix, p. 69.

²*Ibid.*, p. 73. Two of these ballads, which have as their hero Edward III, are noted in *König Eduard III von England im Lichte europäischer Poesie*, by Gustav Liebau, *Anglistische Forschungen* (Heidelberg, 1901). The second, "The King

'Robin Hood and the Shepherd.'¹ In the latter occurs a similar meeting, fight for the shepherd's food and drink, and sounding of the horn. In Edward's adventure with the tanner, in addition to these, there is the final reward as well. It must be supposed, then, that the incident of the cakes has been merely inserted in an often used story of a disguised king and a shepherd.

THE LATIN PLAY OF 'ALVREDUS.'

The earliest fiction by a known author of modern times is a Latin play composed by William Drury (*fl.* 1641), which the present writer has not had the opportunity to examine. Its title-page reads: "Alvredus sive Alfredus, Tragi-Comœdia ter exhibitâ in seminario Anglorum Duaceno ab ejusdem collegii Juventute, Anno Domini M. DC. XIX."² The work is "in five acts, and in verse," and is "on the history of Alfred the Great and his subsequent deliverance of his people." It was published at Douay, France, in 1620, to which town Drury had gone after an imprisonment in England on account of his adherence to catholicism, and where he taught poetry and rhetoric at the English college.³

BLACKMORE'S EPIC.

A little more than a hundred years after the above play appeared the long epic upon Alfred by Sir Richard Blackmore.⁴ As with others of the authors who have attempted to celebrate Alfred in

and the Hermit," was, as Scott has explained, the source of the chapter of *Ivanhoe*, which describes the meeting of the incognito Richard and Friar Tuck. The chief motive of the deer-stealing which appears here, and in so many of these ballads, is absent from that of Alfred.

¹ *Ballads*, pt. v, p. 165.

² *Ex officina Joannis Bogardi: Duaci, 1620. 16?*

³ The play is mentioned by both Hearne and Tanner (*ut supra*). The above account is drawn from the *Catalogue of the British Museum*, and the *Dict. Nat. Biog.* To avoid repetition it may be here stated that excellent accounts of nearly all the authors subsequently mentioned are to be found in the latter work.

⁴ *Alfred. An Epick Poem. In Twelve Books.* Dedicated to the illustrious Prince Frederick of Hanover. By Sir Richard Blackmore, M. D. London. Printed by W. Botham for James Knapton, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1723. 12?

verse, Blackmore's name is now best preserved by the ridicule of his more brilliant contemporaries. His best remembered literary conquest is doubtless that which he achieves in the contest of song in Pope's 'Dunciad,' where,

"All hail him victor in both gifts of song,
Who sings so loudly, and who sings so long."¹

Blackmore's power of sustained song was well shown in his epics, of which he had already published 'Arthur,' and 'Eliza,' of ten books each.

'Alfred' is dedicated to Frederick Louis, then Duke of Hanover, and afterwards Prince of Wales, the son of George II, and father of George III.² A lengthy Preface follows, in the following words of which is stated the real subject of the poem,—“the forming of a young Prince for Empire and the right Government of a people.” The choice of the hero is evidently of secondary importance: “To accomplish my aim I pitched upon Alfred as a proper general character to be the Principal Agent.”³ The greater part of the Preface is occupied with a tedious plea for the superiority of the Christian religion over those of antiquity as the foundation of an epic. The author also claims the use of discourse as well as action in such a poem. As his historical authorities Blackmore cites Asser, and Walker, the translator of Spelman's *Life into Latin*.

Speaking briefly the epic tells the story of Alfred's adventures during travels made as a young man, at the end of which he

¹ II-268. It is difficult to choose, when one may cite ridicule from Dryden, Garth, Pope, Swift, and Dennis. Perhaps nothing is more severe than Johnson's "I do not remember, that by any author, serious or comical, I have found *Eliza* either praised or blamed." *Life of Blackmore* (Chalmers, *English Poets*, x, 315).

² In contrast to the eulogies which Blackmore introduces into his poem may be cited Thackeray's words: "Let us not seek for stones to batter that forgotten grave, but acquiesce in the contemporary epitaph over him:—

'Here lies Fred
Who was alive, and is dead,'" etc.

The Four Georges (London, 1891), p. 70. Blackmore was a staunch supporter of the house of Hanover, and claims in the Preface to *Alfred* an important part in securing its accession.

³ Perhaps suggested by the edition of *Asser* by Wise in the previous year.

returns to England, defeats the Danes and takes the throne. A synopsis of the twelve books is as follows :

Book I. After a short "Proposition," or "Invocation," young Alfred leaves England for his travels, accompanied by his friend and former instructor Guithun. With the consent of his father, Atulpo, Alfred travels that he may prepare himself for the throne. On the way from Rome to Naples, Lucifer sends a storm which wrecks the ship upon the coast of Numidia. All are lost except Guithun and Alfred who escape by the help of the latter's guardian angel. Advancing through a desert country, Alfred is attacked by a panther, which he kills. The travellers meet a hermit who has been warned of their approach in a vision, and who brings them to his cell, where a discussion ensues upon "the advantages of a private life, and the prudent forms of civil government."

Book II. The Hermit Silva relates his story; how he was called from his native country of Spain to become tutor to the children of Garcia, King of Naples, and how in time he became counsellor to the King, but was forced to flee by the false accusations of conspirators. The travellers now proceed upon their journey, and as they approach Tunisia the city of King Halla, the signs of prosperity inspire Guithun to speak upon the blessings of liberty.

Book III. Halla entertains his guests at a magnificent banquet. Dolla, a bard, sings the praises of poets, whereupon Alfred declares his intention to aid letters and learning in Britain. He is shown the fleet, and later sings an ode on "Divine Wisdom."

Book IV. Guithun relates to the host the account of their travels. At Rome Alfred was greatly honored, and was anointed by Pope Leo. A discourse by the British Priest Labot upon how princes should rule, and delivered on that occasion, is here introduced.

Book V. The court of Artolan, King of Naples, is next visited, and a great number of names of rivers and cities is mentioned on the journey thither. At Naples Alfred acts as an intermediary between the King and his rebellious subjects. When the bad counsellors, whom he has had dismissed, attempt his life he pardons them at the advice of Guithun.

Book VI. In Sicily Alfred finds the people given over to

pleasures, which are described at great length. Lucifer makes a second attempt to destroy the hero, by means of an eruption of Mount *Ætna*, and is again baffled by the guardian angel *Amel*. The prayers of *Alfred* save the island from destruction, and *Guithun* delivers a discourse on how the world will eventually be destroyed by fire.

Book VII. The Prince now falls under the spell of *Albana*, "a person of consummate beauty." A sickness caused by *Amel* rescues him, however, from this danger, and when again healed by the same agent he regains his self-control. *Albana* attempts to have *Alfred* assassinated, but is foiled by her friend *Mara*, who also loves him. Supposing that she has succeeded, *Albana* stabs herself.

Book VIII. With the journey from Italy to Spain more descriptive geography follows. Satan is again foiled by *Amel* in an attempt to wreck the Prince. He lands upon the coast of Africa, where *Amel*, "to encourage him for future labours and hazardous adventures," shows him heaven and *Tophet* in a vision. In *Tophet* evil counsellors and bad kings are prominent. *Amel* also gives a prophetic description of the future English kings, ending with eulogies of *George I*, his son, and grandson.

Book IX. In the kingdom of *Agmat* the Britons are saved from sacrifice at the hands of fire-worshippers by *Guithun's* prediction of a subsequent eclipse. The episode of a good king and wicked counsellors is again repeated. *Alfred* performs great deeds of valor during a war with a neighboring State. Upon the king's abdication he is offered the crown, but refuses it.

Book X. Arriving in Spain *Alfred* learns of his father's death and the succession of his brother *Ethelbald*. The description of many cities follows. *Fortunio*, King of Navarre, appears as another example of a monarch deceived by bad advisers. *Alfred* induces him to recall the hermit *Silva* (mentioned in Book II), and prosperity is restored.

Book XI. *Alfred* sees an example of an avaricious monarch in the King of Burgundy, and is then recalled to the aid of the King of Navarre, at the head of whose troops he defeats the Moors and rebels.

Book XII. *Alfred* now receives news of the death of *Ethelbald*, and requests from his brother *Ethelred* to return and give

assistance against the Danes. Ethelred is slain and Alfred returns to be proclaimed king. His camp is near Selwood forest, and to it come warriors from various parts of the land, Devonshire, Dorset, Cornwall, and the West of England. The Danes are near Edington when Alfred enters their camp as a minstrel. In spite of help from Lucifer, the enemy is then defeated by Alfred in the ensuing battle. When the wife and daughter of Gunter are taken prisoners Alfred at once restores them. This act of generosity so impresses the Danes that they make peace and become Christians. Gunter is baptized at Cunetio, and gives his daughter Elsitha in marriage to Alfred.

It is obvious from this synopsis that, as before indicated, the real subject of the poem is not Alfred, but wise monarchical government. The words with which the hermit addresses Alfred voice the moral admonitions expressed in hundreds of similar lines :

“You, gen’rous Prince, not riches, Pow’r and Fame,
But high Heroick Virtue make your Aim.”

The poem shows an endless number of such examples of the author’s theory that Discourse as well as Action should have its place in an epic. Another view, which is dilated upon in the Preface, is the inferiority of the pagan epics ; yet the whole poem is obviously modelled upon the *Æneid*, and particular passages show especial imitation. Such is the episode which closely copies the story of Dido in Book VII.

Of course the character of Alfred himself is only the blankest of lay figures, draped with the conventional heroic virtues of the eighteenth century. His valor is described :

“Then Alfred up the lines intrepid rose,
And by his flaming sword’s repeated blows
Cuts down the cohorts that his Arms oppose.”

His other characteristics are in the same exaggerated style. The threatened lapse from this monotonous virtue, which marks Alfred’s adventure at the “Court of Sicily,” is amusing in its absurdity. At first the hero repels the fair Albana with the words :

“While trav’ling I pursue my first Design
I must the great Felicity decline.”

But later the situation becomes more serious; while "Love and Reason Alfred's heart divide," and the "Dictates of Prudence," and "conquering Passion" alternately sway him. He is only saved at the critical juncture by an illness. But Blackmore, as a physician, was not willing merely to let this pass as a mysterious sickness. The guardian angel brings relief to the afflicted Prince with these words:

"This Medicine in my Hand shall Health assure,
Asswage your Feaver, and compleat your cure.
Then to the painful Boil with Speed apply
This wholesome Gumme, and Alfred shall not dye."

This is what becomes of Asser's account of Alfred's early struggles with the flesh, and the affliction which he prayed for!

Other facts, which the author obtained from earlier accounts, are Alfred's travels, and coronation by Pope Leo; his interest in the Navy and in Literature; the disguise as a minstrel; the pity shown the wife and daughter of Gunter; and the final victory over the Danes. The manner in which most of these are distorted from their original form is obvious. The Hermit Silva is in the same way evidently suggested by Neot, whose prophecies are easily amplified into forecasts of England's glory; a plan employed by many of the subsequent writers of fiction.

From the above it is evident that the great mass of this long poem is the author's own invention. As Blackmore, the physician, seems to speak in the account of Alfred's sickness, so another of his professions, that of school-master, appears to suggest the long lists of kings, countries and cities, which are, however, nearly all created by the author's imagination.¹

But enough has been said to show why, in Johnson's words, "'Alfred' took his place by 'Eliza' in silence and darkness."

¹ "In the multitude of fictitious foreign nobility the poet has hit upon the name of one actual person, Garcio, king of Navarre, who reigned from 905 to 925. We might mention Lucifer, too, as a name not altogether foreign to our ears. These seem to be all of the 136 characters that can claim any connexion with history." Arnold, *King Alfred in English Poetry*, p. 24. Johnson (*ut supra*) thinks that at Oxford Blackmore must have passed his time "with very little attention to the business of the place; for in his poems the ancient names of nations or places, which he often produces, are pronounced by chance."

THE MASQUE OF THOMSON AND MALLET.

The next work of fiction founded upon the story of Alfred was, in part at least, the work of a true poet. James Thomson had already paid a pleasing tribute to "the Best of Kings" in his 'Seasons.'¹ With his collaborator, David Mallet, of dubious memory, Thomson wrote 'Alfred: A Masque,' which, as its original title-page tells, was "represented before Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales, at Cliffden, on the first of August, 1740."²

The scene of the 'Masque' is laid in the island of Athelney, where, the Argument states, Alfred, "abandoned by his subjects," was obliged to retire after the capture of Chippenham by the Danes. Alfred is living "habited like a peasant . . . unknown . . . in a shepherd's cottage." There "he is supposed to be found . . . by the Earl of Devon; whose castle upon the river Tau was then besieged by the Danes." The other characters are Alfred's wife, Eltruda; a Hermit; Corin, a shepherd, and his wife, Emma.

There are two acts, which are divided into numerous scenes. The 'Masque' opens with a dialogue between Corin and Emma concerning the stranger (Alfred), who has come to their cottage, and who they suppose to be some English captain fleeing from the Danes. Alfred receives from the Earl of Devon further news of the devastations of the enemy, and together they bewail the state of the land. The Earl determines to make a last attack upon the Danes from his besieged castle. Alfred is encouraged by the singing of unseen spirits, and later meets a Hermit, who tells him of a vision he had of England's future greatness, although he is ignorant of Alfred's own fate. The King receives good advice, and declares his intentions to rule well if he is given the opportunity. In the last (sixth) scene of this act Eltruda enters,

¹ *Vide infra* under General Mention.

² London; Printed for A. Miller, over-against St. Clement's Church in the Strand. 1740.

It is reprinted in Thomson's *Works* (ed. Miller, London, 1762), vol. III; and in Thomson's *Poetical Works* (ed. Bell, London, 1855-61), vol. I.

having fled with her children at the approach of the Danes to the castle where Alfred had placed her.

In Act II Alfred and Eltruda bewail their fortunes, and the dangers which beset their children. To the Hermit and themselves there appears the "Genius of England," who summons in turn the spirits of Edward III, Phillip and the Black Prince, Elizabeth and William III; upon each of whom the Hermit makes comments. He then foretells the coming of George I, and finally prophesies the defeat of the Danes. Devon enters in the next scene, and tells how he has surprised the enemy and obtained a victory. In the last scene Corin declares his intention to follow the now-revealed King. The Ode of 'Rule Britannia' is then sung, and the play ends with the Hermit's prediction of Britain's greatness and her possessions in the new world.

The purpose of the authors of this work was doubtless merely to provide an evening's entertainment for their Royal patrons, and hence, as might be supposed, Frederick Louis, now Prince of Wales,¹ receives as marked compliments as he did from Blackmore, when he was Duke of Hanover, seventeen years before. As in the earlier poem these compliments are introduced in the prophecies of England's future, but an amusing difference reflects the well-known quarrels between George II and his son. All direct reference to the former is omitted. George I is praised, and immediately after him his grandson. Moreover, the father of the Black Prince is described,

"Great above *jealousy*, the guilty mark
That brands all meaner minds, see, he applauds
The *filial excellence*, and gives him scope
To blaze in his full brightness!"

With such a reason for its existence, and in such an unsuitable poetic form, it is natural that the present work, though of superior

¹ "The Prince was at that time struggling for popularity, and by the influence of Mr. Lyttleton professed himself the patron of wit; to him Thomson was introduced, and being gaily interrogated about the state of his affairs, said 'that they were in a more poetical posture than formerly,' and had a pension allowed him of one hundred pounds a year." Johnson's *Life of Thomson*, (*English Poets*, vol. XII, p. 408).

quality to that of Blackmore, should scarcely give a more life-like picture of Alfred. What poetic merits the piece possesses, lie in the description of nature, and not of the hero. A passage, which, with the 'Rule Britannia,' represents its best style, is the soliloquy of Alfred in the First Act :

“’Tis now the depth of darkness and repose,
 Now walks mute Midnight shadowy o’er the plain
 To rule the solitary hour ; and sheds
 His slumbery influence o’er the peaceful world.
 All nature seems to rest.”

Another passage, which marks as happy an adaption of legend as occurs in any work upon Alfred, is the description of the Raven standard :

“ Wrought by the sisters of the Danish king,
 Of furious Ivar, in a midnight hour :
 While the sick moon, at their enchanted song,
 Wrapt in pale tempest, labour’d thro’ the clouds.
 The demons of destruction then, they say,
 Were all abroad, and mixing with the woof
 Their baleful power : the sisters ever sung,
 ‘ Shake, standard, shake this ruin on our foes ! ’ ”

Other incidents, depending on history or legend, are Alfred’s disguise, the Hermit and his advice, and the introduction of the Earl of Devon.

The speeches of Alfred himself are conceived in an exclamatory style which recalls the often-repeated story of Thomson’s line : “ O Sophronisba, Sophronisba O ! ” “ O despair ! O grief of griefs ! ” cries the King, and again : “ O my people ! O ruin’d England ! ”

The supernatural machinery usual to the form of the Masque is employed to introduce a number of songs, but none of these bears the martial spirit of the famous ode, which Southey has called “ the political hymn of this country as long as she maintains her political power.” The vexed question of the authorship of ‘ Rule

Britannia' now seems definitely settled both by external and internal evidence in favor of Thomson.¹

If, however, only the concluding Ode of the 'Masque' has achieved immortality it must not be forgotten that the whole work obtained a marked and lasting popularity for a considerable time after its appearance. This was largely due to the fact that war with Spain had been declared in the previous year, and that just at that time an English fleet was about to attack Peru.

In 1745 the 'Masque' was altered into an opera and performed at Covent Garden. On February twenty-third, 1751, Garrick appeared in a new form of the original work prepared by Mallet.² In the Advertisement to this the author declares that he has found it "necessary to new-plan the whole, as well as write the particular scenes over again; to enlarge the design, and make Alfred what he should have been at first, the principal figure in his own 'Masque.'" Here, too, Mallet lays claim to the authorship of the now famous Ode in purposely ambiguous language: "Neither could I retain, of my friend's part, more than three or four speeches, and a part of one song."

Mallet's language is calculated to give an equally false impression as to the general changes made by him.³ These are of less

¹ Cf. Morel, *James Thomson, Sa Vie et ses œuvres*, (Paris, 1895), pp. 47-58. The whole discussion is reviewed in Thomson's Life in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* The error is made, however, of saying that Mallet did not claim the Ode until eleven years after Thomson's death. It was three years afterwards, in the edition of the *Masque* for 1751.

² *Alfred: A Masque*, acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, by His Majesty's Servants. London: Printed for A. Miller, opposite to Catharine Street, in the Strand. 1751.

Reprinted in Mallet's *Works*, (ed. Miller and Vaillant, London, 1759), vol. III.

³ As an example of Mallet's changes for the worse, compare those made in the description of the Raven Standard with the passage as already quoted:

"Wrought by the sisters of the Danish King
At midnight's blackest hour; when the sick moon,
Wrapt in eclipse by their enchanted song,
Down through the turbid clouds her influence shed
Of baleful power. The sisters ever sung:
'Shake, Standard, shake, destruction on our foes.'"

For a severe arraignment of Mallet's claims see the account of the play by Genest, *English Stage* (Bath, 1832), vol. IV, p. 324.

importance than he seems to intimate, although there is omission, addition, and transposing of material. There are three acts instead of two, and the cast is increased by another shepherd and shepherdess, Edwin and Edith, the Danish King, his son, and another Dane. In the second act Emma and Eltruda, who have been captured by the Danes, are rescued by Corin and Alfred. This, as will appear later, becomes a frequently imitated motive of subsequent plays. Mallet makes Alfred more prominent by causing him to win the final battle (but not upon the stage), which had been the act of Devon in the earlier form. Several new songs, and an Ode are introduced, all of a very poor quality.

Mallet evidently paid a great deal of attention to scenic effect, but in spite of this, Garrick could not make the play a success, and it was acted only nine times.¹ The subject had, however, made an impression upon the public; probably chiefly through the published form of the original 'Masque,' and the singing of the Ode. In 1753 the wording of Mallet's production was slightly changed for 'Alfred the Great, A Drama for Music, new composed by Mr. Arne,' and this is identical with 'Alfred the Great, an Oratorio,' of the following year. In this form the songs are increased in number, and their quality is proportionately lowered.

Since the middle of the eighteenth century there have been so many works of fiction devoted to Alfred that their examination is made easiest by considering them according to form. The majority of them have appeared as dramas, and these, many of which show the influence of the Masque just observed, will be first noticed.

¹ "Garrick performed Alfred, but with all his powers he was not able to give celebrity to the piece. He hoped, it seems, when the eye was gratified with splendid scenery, and the ear charmed with vocal and instrumental music, that the play would have been crowned with brilliant success. He was much disappointed, and Mallet did not add a sprig of laurel to his brow." Murphy, *Life of Garrick* (London, 1801), vol. I, p. 204. Johnson says (*Life of Mallet, English Poets*, XIV, 4) that Garrick was induced to act Alfred by Mallet's promising "to find a niche" for him in his *Life of Marlborough*; an unpaid bargain, as the *Life* was never written. The lexicographer's low opinion of Mallet, whose change of name he used as an example of *alias* in the *Dictionary*, appears on many pages of Boswell's *Life*. Murphy (*ut supra*, p. 381) tells the same story of Mallet and Garrick, but in regard to the play *Elvira*.

SUBSEQUENT DRAMAS.

'DELIVERER OF HIS COUNTRY.'

In the same year as Dr. Arne's 'Drama for Music,' mentioned above, appeared from the hands of an anonymous author, 'Alfred the Great; Deliverer of His Country.'¹ This "Tragedy" consists of five acts, divided into seventeen scenes.² A brief synopsis will suffice :

Act I. The Danish Generals make peace with Alfred; Ivar in good faith, but Godrum and Oskytel determined on revenge for their past defeat. At Winchester Ethelred and Elfreda prepare for their nuptials. During Dunulf's absence his daughter Egwina is driven from the cottage by her cruel step-mother, Maliba.

¹ *A Tragedy*. By the Author of *The Friendly Rivals*. Printed for the Author, and sold by M. Michell, at the King's-Arms, Fleet-street. 1753.

The Friendly Rivals; or, Love the Best Contriver (London, 1752), is as worthless as *The Deliverer*. I have not been able to discover the author's name.

² The *Dramatis Personæ* are :

Alfred, *King of the West-Saxons*.
 Edmund
 Edward } *his sons*.
 Ethelward }
 Odda, *Earl of Devon*.
 Ethelred, *Earl of Kent, afterwards Viceroy of Mercia*.
 Gregour, *King of the Scots*.
 Medoc, *King of South Wales*.
 Dunulf, *a Neatherd in the Isle of Athelney*.
 Ivar
 Hubba } *Brothers, Generals of the Danes*.
 Halfdene }
 Guthrum, *Hubba's Lieutenant-General*.
 Godrum
 Oskytel } *Captains of the Danish Cavalry*.
 Anand }
 Queen Alswitha, *Wife of Alfred*.
 Elfreda, *their daughter*.
 Angurtha, *Wife to Odda*.
 Egwina, *a shepherdess, daughter of Dunulf*.
 Maliba, *wife to Dunulf*.
 Britannia.

Trumpets, officers, guards, and attendants.

It is interesting to compare the names adopted in the different dramas, and they are therefore given for each work.

Act II. After Ethelred's marriage, news is brought of the killing of Edmund by the Danes. Alswitha is sent to Warham Castle, which is later taken by the Danes, and where Godrum attempts to win Elfreda's favor. Egwina enters the service of the Earl of Devon and his wife, where she has a vision which predicts that she shall become Queen.

Act III. At Warham Castle Godrum is stabbed by Elfreda, and the castle is taken by the English under Ethelred. Alfred finds the enemy so superior in numbers that he temporarily disbands his army, and visits Dunulf's cottage in disguise. Odda defeats Hubba and Halfdene, and captures the Raven.

Act IV. Alfred is scolded by Maliba for allowing the cakes to burn, and is forced to help in the housework. Edward and Egwina, who have fallen in love at first sight, receive his blessing. The latter is of high birth, since Dunulf is really a noble of East Anglia.

Act V. Guthrum is told of how Elfreda fought at Warham Castle clad as a man. Alfred enters the Danish camp as a Welsh harper. With the aid of the Welsh or Scotch forces the English now defeat the Danes, whom they pursue to Tunbridge Castle. Guthrum, who had unwittingly broken the peace, surrenders and becomes a Christian.

A Prologue is spoken by Ethelward "in a scholar's gown and cap," and an Epilogue by Elfreda "in man's apparel." The latter, in allusion to her vow, gives as the author's source, the 'History of England' by Rapin.¹ There is a considerable advance in the use of historical incident over the works already considered, but the unsuccessful nature of its treatment is sufficiently obvious from the Synopsis above. The author's style is, however, of even poorer description, and many of his lines are free from any sense of scansion.² The glaring anachronisms are often comical, such as the description of Egwina, "neatly dressed like a shepherdess, with a crook and pouch, and a small bundle." Her

¹ Rapin de Thoyras, *Historie d'Angleterre* (Paris, 1724), vol. I, p. 326. There is an English translation, London, 1743-47.

² Such as

"Though his Brother's Obsequies kept him at Wimbourne,"

and

"Can Odda and Ethelred find 'em employment."

adoption by Lady Devon sounds like Miss Edgeworth's 'Moral Tales,' rather than the ninth century.¹ Egwina's vision is that which has been already noticed under William of Malmesbury. Subsequently "Britannia" appears while she is sleeping, and explains it in a manner doubtless suggested by Thomson's 'Masque.'

The character of Alfred is colorless,² except when he enters the enemy's camp, and then,

" he bows
 And catches money in his hat . . .
 And takes his Leave so well in antick Tricks
 They think it is his humour : Now he skips
 Just like a Magpye from 'em while they hold
 Their sides, I guess, with laughter."

At the same time he speaks in dialect :

"A poor Welsh Harper, pleash you :
 Tavid's so dim ; hur cannot see to work,
 But hur can play King Arthur's war-like Tunes
 And sing you Pallads of King Vortigern,
 Of poth their Pattles with the cruel Saxons."

When other absurdities, such as the beheading of Godrum by the warlike Elfeda, are considered, the dictum of Baker's 'Biographia Dramatica' ³ seems just:—"This is a despicable performance."

¹ "They say my Lady Devon
 Is truly charitable; she, perhaps,
 May take me in her service:—this Needle-work
 [*Pulling out a Sampler*]
 My mother taught me, must now recommend me."

To whom later the charitable Lady :

"Child, did you do this work? There's many Ladies
 Much higher bred, who cannot equal it."

² In Dunulf's cottage Maliba reproves him thus :

"See! see! how the cake is burning.
 Odz wooks! One wou'd think you had no eyes :
 My husband said you would be useful to me,
 But here you waste your time in cutting sticks
 And making foolish bows, nor mind the cake,
 Tho' you'll be glad to eat on't fast enough,
 You've a confounded Stomach,—come, be useful!
 Do something for your Living: here, help me on wi' the pot."

³ London, 1812.

HOME'S 'ALFRED.'

In marked contrast to the preceding anonymous author the next dramatist to treat Alfred was one who, for a time, enjoyed a tremendous popularity. But none of the subsequent works of John Home¹ equalled the phenomenal success of 'Douglas.' 'Alfred,'² the last of his dramatic productions, was acted on the 21st of January, 1778—more than twenty years after the appearance of 'Douglas'—and in marked contrast to the reception of that play was withdrawn after three performances.³

Home was apparently hurt at the failure of 'Alfred' upon the stage, and in the published form defends himself in a Preface against the critics who objected to the part the King plays as lover and impostor.

The play is in five acts, which are as follows:⁴

Act I. In a dialogue between the Earl of Devonshire and an officer, the former tells how Alfred, supposed to be dead, is in hiding at Athelney, whence he has made attacks upon the enemy. Alfred enters and bewails the unknown fate of Ethelswida. Sur-

¹ For an interesting account of Home see the review of Mackenzie's *Life* by Sir Walter Scott, *Miscellaneous Works* (Edinburgh, 1841), vol. XIX, p. 283 ff.

² *Alfred: A Tragedy*. As performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden. London: Printed for T. Becket, Adelphi, in the Strand. 1778.

Reprinted in Home's *Collected Works* (Edinburgh, 1822), vol. I.

³ Mackenzie, in the "Account of the Life and Works of John Home," prefixed to the *Works* (*ut supra* p. 66), says of *Alfred*, "This tragedy is undoubtedly the weakest of his productions . . . Indeed, had it possessed more merit than it did, an English audience could hardly have been pleased to see their Alfred, the pride of their country in its earliest age, the patriot and the law-giver, melted down to the weakness of love, like the common-place hero of an ordinary drama."

⁴ *Dramatis Personæ* :

Alfred, *King of England*.
 Edwin, *Earl of Devonshire*.
 Earl of Surrey.
 Hinguar, *King of the Danes*.
 Rollo, *Danish Chief*.
 Officers, English and Danish.
 Ethelswida, (*betrothed to Alfred*).
 Ronex, *Consort of Hinguar*.
 Edda } *Attendants on Ethelswida*.
 Elisa }

rey, under whose charge she was placed, arrives from the Danish camp, where she is held captive, and where he himself lives disguised as Erick, a Dane. Alfred determines to enter the Danish camp.

Act II. Disguised as a minstrel Alfred wins the confidence of Hinguar, and is, by him, left with Ethelswitha that he may cure her of the madness, which she feigns. Ronex quarrels with her husband, through jealousy of the captive, and Hinguar, afraid that she will harm Ethelswida, makes Erick (*i. e.*, Surrey) the latter's guard.

Act III. The attendant, Edda, tells Hinguar that Ethelswida's madness is feigned. Hinguar, suspecting the disguised Alfred, summons him, but the latter pretends to be Surrey, and declares Ethelswida his sister Emma. Hinguar then surprises Ethelswida and learns from her the truth of her own and Alfred's identity. He refuses Alfred's challenge to single combat, and threatens him with death unless he yields Ethelswida and marries a Danish princess.

Act IV. Ronex, with the help of Rollo and other Danes, attempts to kill Ethelswida, but learning her innocence, agrees to make common cause with Alfred against Hinguar. Ethelswida is told by Edda that Ronex wishes to marry Alfred. Edda then promises to help the captive's escape, really meaning to betray her to Hinguar.

Act V. Ethelswida learns from Edda that Alfred, having refused to marry Ronex, is now the captive of the rebellious faction of the Danes. Two assassins appear to kill the Saxon princess at the command of the jealous Ronex. Meanwhile Alfred, believing that the latter is sheltering his betrothed, agrees to fight with the rebellious Danes against Hinguar. The Danish King enters, and hears of the supposed death of Ethelswida. He fights with Alfred, and dying, tells him of Ethelswida's fate. Alfred swoons. His betrothed entering, supposes him dead, and is about to stab herself, when he revives, and they are happily reunited.

The involved and improbable nature of this plot must have been obvious to the author himself. In the Preface referred to, he defends the character of Alfred in rather sophistical reasoning, as follows: "Is it impossible to suppose a young hero was in

love? Is it inconsistent to represent the person who was a Legislator when advanced in years, as a lover in his youth! Does it degrade the character of a hero to suppose that he was in love with the princess whom he afterwards married? Is it not rather injurious to conclude that he chose a consort whom he did not love?" In a like manner the rôle of impostor is defended; for the action of Alfred is like that of Orestes in the 'Electra' of Sophocles, and to praise Sophocles and blame Home can, the author thinks, only be accounted for in one way: "an imaginary idea has been formed of the character of Alfred as an old mortified ascetic sage, of spirit too sublime and ætherial to descend to human passions or human actions." This the author strongly repudiates.

In connection with these statements it may be noticed that Home makes little or no use of historical material; less even than Blackmore or Thomson. There is no attempt to present Alfred as he really lived. The author states that the purpose of the drama is to "display his (Alfred's) character in new situations connected with the old and well-known events of his life and fortune." But the only "event" employed is the minstrel disguise. Believing that Alfred was "compelled by the pressure of those times to practice a thousand acts, to exist by simulation and dissimulation," the author gives free rein to his invention. Alfred thus bears the message of his own supposed death to Hinguar:

"When in the rocky cave I found him dead,
I then resolved, King of the warlike Danes,
To bear to thee the tidings of his death;
And as a proof that could not be deny'd,
That ring I took, which erst mine eyes beheld
When he was crowned in London, England's King."

The general style seems stilted and exaggerated to a modern reader, but there are some graceful lines, as in the dialogue between Alfred, in disguise, and Ethelswida, assuming madness:

"*Eth.* Are all thy songs of melancholy strain?
Alf. The greater part.

Eth. Then thou hast lost thy love,
Else thou could'st ne'er have felt true melancholy,
I will not hear thee now. I'm poor in spirit,

* * * *

I choose a garland song, a lighter strain.

There lived a youth, by silver Thames,
Who loved the maidens fair ;
But loose, at large, the rover ranged,
Nor felt a lover's care.

We must not with one censure level all :
Some men are true of heart, but very few ;
Those live not long, they die before their time.
'Tis pity of them. Oh !”

The influence of Ophelia's mad scenes is obvious. Alfred's words are worth quoting :

“ Her mind's a burning fire,
Where sudden thoughts, like wreaths of smoke, arise,
And, parting from the flame, disperse in air.
Her shatter'd fancy, like a mirror broken,
Reflects no single image just and true,
But many false ones.”

But in spite of a few such passages of real beauty, this attempt to picture Alfred as a youthful lover is not successful, and his emotional nature is as exaggerated as in the 'Masque.' Thus, when about to meet Ethelswida, he exclaims :

“ I tremble,
And, like a coward, shake from head to foot.”

BICKNELL'S 'PATRIOT KING.'

The next two dramas deserve but brief attention. Alexander Bicknell, the author of the first of these, was a diligent maker of books upon widely varying subjects including fiction, grammar, philosophy, and history. His 'Life of Alfred' has been already

mentioned. From the Advertisement to 'The Patriot King, or Alfred and Elvida,'¹ which appeared in 1788, it seems that this 'Tragedy' must have been written about the same time as the 'Life,' although the latter was published eleven years earlier.

The plot of Bicknell's play bears many resemblances to that of Home. In a similar manner the captured Elvida attracts the admiration of Haldane, and so arouses the jealousy of Gunhilda. In Act II Elvida and Emma are cheered in their captivity by the song of an invisible "attendant spirit." Haldane forces his attentions upon the Queen in vain. Act III. Gothrum, who considers Elvida his own by right of conquest, incites Gunhilda to further jealousy. Haldane is about to stab Ethelred, the father of Elvida; the latter seizes the dagger to kill herself, but is stopped by the spirit. Act IV. On "a plain on the coast of Norway" the magician, whose spells protect Haldane, attempts to renew the charms, but the "attendant spirit" foils him. Odun brings news of the gathered Saxon forces to Alfred, who then enters the enemy's camp, and sings before Haldane; at the same time letting Elvida know that help is near. Gunhilda vainly tries to kill Elvida through the aid of a sorceress. The Saxons surprise the Danes, just as Haldane is about to force Elvida to his wishes, and Alfred kills Haldane and Gothrum. Gunhilda stabs herself.

¹*An Historical Tragedy.* Written by Alex^r. Bicknell, author of *The Life of King Alfred*; *The History of Edward the Black Prince*, etc., etc. Editor of *Captain Carver's Travels through the interior Parts of North America*; and an *Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy*, etc. London: Printed for the author, and sold at his house Red-Lion Street, near Red-Lion Square; and by all the Booksellers. 1788.

Drumatis Personæ.

Alfred, *the Anglo-Saxon King.*

Ethelred, *a Saxon Earl, father of Elvida.*

Odun, *Earl of Devon.*

Edwyn, *a young Saxon Nobleman.*

Gothrum, *a Danish chief.*

Elvida, *Alfred's Queen.*

Emma, *Daughter of the Earl of Devon, Elvida's attendant.*

Gunhilda, *the Danish Queen.*

Attendant Spirit.

Magician.

Witch.

The part played by Alfred in this absurd production is comparatively small, and apart from the incidents of the last act consists of moral soliloquies upon his misfortunes. He is described

“In peace as gentle as the fleecy lamb,”

while in war-times he

“like a roaring lion rushes on
Strewing his paths with blood and mangled limbs.”¹

The single merit of this work is that it does not attempt the incident of the cakes.²

ANONYMOUS ‘TRAGEDY’ OF 1789.

Bad as is the work of Bicknell, a still lower depth of absurdity was reached by a play which appeared in the following year, entitled ‘Alfred: An Historical Tragedy.’³ The unknown author acknowledges as his source “the French of M. d’Arnaud,”⁴ which work will be considered later.

¹ In Bicknell’s phraseology tears become “pellucid drops,” and ale, “elevating juice.” The guardian spirit contributes such verses as:

“To Alfred Haldane’s fate shall yield,
Virtue alone can safely shield.”

² Indeed, for the biographer of his hero, Bicknell makes surprisingly little use of history in his fiction, despite the claim that he

“Would while he charms the Moralist assume,
From History’s pure page the mind illume.”

³ To which is added a Collection of Miscellaneous Poems, By the Same Author. Sheffield: Printed for the Author, by J. Gales; and sold by him and J. Robinson, in London. 1789.

In a Preface the work is declared to be “the first attempts of an unfriended author.” Many of the subsequent poems are dedicated to “Maria,” *i. e.*, Helen Maria Williams (1762–1827), a prolific writer, known for her violent espousal of the French Revolution, whose life and works scarcely accord with the poet’s description of

“Enchanting Williams! Nature’s darling child,
Foster’d by Genius and matured by Taste.”

⁴ *Délassements de l’Homme Sensible* (Paris, 1783). *Vide infra* under Prose Works.

The five acts of the present play are broken into a great number of scenes. It will be enough here merely to outline the whole.¹

Alfred visits the nobleman, Albanac, who fears that the King has designs upon his daughter. Alfred, then recalled to his better self, protests his love for Ethelwitha, and his desire to marry her. In disguise Alfred witnesses the quarrels of the Danes, of whom Haldane and Hardune are both rivals for the hand of King Guthrem's sister, Christina. In the last act the Danes are surprised during a "Festival" by the forces of Alfred and the rebellious Hardune. The latter is killed by Haldane. The Danes are permitted to return to Denmark.

An adequate idea of the merits of this work may be gathered by the protest of Albanac to Alfred in regard to Ethelwitha :

" I may have err'd, perhaps, in my conjecture,
And yet the fix'd and singular attention
With which, last night, you ey'd my daughters,
And various other circumstances noted,
Have alarmed me."

But for the suggestion of Alfred in the rôle of a Lothario the author is indebted to the more amusing little sketch of d'Arnaud, where the incident will be seen to be even further developed.

¹ *Persons of the Drama :*

Alfred.

Albanac.

Eldred } *Sons to Albanac.*
Egbert }

Ethelbert } *Attendants on Alfred.*
Edward }

Fitzhugh.

Ethelwitha } *Daughters to Albanac.*
Ethelinda }

Matilda, *an attendant.*

Guthrem, *the Danish King.*

Haldane } *Danish Chiefs.*
Hardune }

Arvar, *an officer.*

PENN'S 'BATTLE OF EDDINGTON.'

The next work to be mentioned is to some extent an improvement upon the preceding. The author seems at least to have possessed a genuine interest in the history of Alfred, as is attested by the numerous notes to the last edition of his work.

John Penn, grandson of William Penn, was the author of several volumes of now forgotten verse. The first edition of 'The Battle of Eddington; or, British Liberty'¹ appeared in 1792; another in 1796, and the last in 1832.

Penn shared with his friend William Mason² a curious belief that a chorus and semi-chorus should be employed in English drama, and such, composed by the "attendants of the Queen," are freely used in the present work. In this the treachery of Ceoluph plays a conspicuous part. He first tries to tempt Alfred to assume more power (Act II), and then captures Elsitha who has been left by Alfred in a peasant's cottage (Act III). The captive Queen is guarded by a friendly Dane who relates to her and to the chorus the history of his conversion to Christianity. The Irish are defeated by the Welsh and English, and the Queen rescued (Act IV). In the last act Elsitha is again taken captive by the Danes,

¹ *The Battle of Eddington or British Liberty. A Tragedy.* By John Penn, Esqr. D. C. L. Governor of Portland, etc. etc. . . . Dedicated to Lord Ashley . . . London: 1832.

The first two editions do not bear the author's name. The second and third editions, which are nearly identical, are enlarged from the first, but the outline of the story is the same in all three.

The characters are as follows:

Alfred, *king of England.*

Mervin, *his dependent, a prince of South Wales.*

Ethelred, *General of the English.*

Ceoluph, *a treacherous English noble.*

(Edmund, *the son and heir of Alfred,* is introduced in the second edition).

A Danish captain of auxiliaries, brought to the Danes from Ireland.

Ceoluph's Vassal.

Elsitha, *Queen of England.*

Editha, *an old woman inhabiting the cottage.*

² Author of *Elfrida*; written on the Model of the Ancient Greek Tragedy, Mason's *Works* (London, 1811), vol. II. The elaborate choruses are here imitated from Gray.

and rescued again by Mervin who kills Ceoluph. The Scotch and Welsh then join forces with the English.

Penn's language is for the most part as bald and unimaginative as Bicknell's is turgid. In lines which may be reminiscent of the 'Proverbs,' Edmund speaks of his father's admonitions :

“ ‘A king's first care,
He told us, ‘ was to single virtue forth ;
And make mankind respect its bright example.’
Oft too he said, ‘ he ought not to forget
Those trusty subjects, who, in all his sufferings
Fought at his side, or shar'd in his distress.’ ”

Penn, like his friend Pye, whose epic will be presently considered, deserves at least credit for an honest if inartistic attempt to “ exhibit as clear a picture as possible of those dark ages, and above all, to collect together every circumstance in the life of Alfred anyway remarkable.”¹

O'KEEFFE'S 'MAGIC BANNER.'

A prose comedy is the somewhat unexpected form of the next drama. John O'Keeffe, an Irish actor, and author of some sixty-eight plays, tells in 'Recollections'² how “ on some well-known circumstances recorded of Alfred the Great I formed a three-act play, 'Alfred, or the Magic Banner,'³ and wrote to Mr. Colman, Jr., about it, who brought it out at the Haymarket, but it had not much success. It was played three nights, and then the audience furl'd up my tremendous banner of the three ravens forever. My author's profits were 16 pounds. . . . Though my 'Alfred' had no great success, I derived some comfort from the proud thought that in the time of King Bryan Borrou, at the decisive battle of Clontarf, the Danes were completely driven out of Ireland by the regal chieftain, O'Keeffe, striking off the head of Magnus, the Danish standard-bearer, and taking the banner of the three ravens, thus

¹ From Penn's Notes.

² (London, 1826), vol. II, p. 346.

³ *In Three Acts.* Performed at the Theatre Royal in Haymarket in 1796. *Dramatic Works of John O'Keeffe* (London, 1798), vol. IV.

destroying its magic power, by which the Danes lost all hope, and were ultimately defeated."

The greater part of O'Keeffe's play is a farce, in no way concerned with Alfred or the history of his times.¹ The Lady Albina persuades Gog to believe that he is her husband in order to arouse the jealousy of her own negligent consort, Earl Burrhed. Blanche, the daughter of Gog and Bertha, is loved by Eustace, who is in the employ of her parents, and who turns out to be the son of the noble Dane, Hastings; although "found, as 'tis rumoured, in an eagle's nest, and fostered here by Alfred." (The Nestingus legend.)

Alfred only appears once in the first act, when he signs a treaty with the Danes. Later, while fleeing from the Danes, and faint from a wound, he is given water by Hastings, although the warriors do not recognize one another. In Bertha's cottage she asks Alfred:—

"Whither going? Want a place? Have you a trade?

Alfred. Yes; but they wont let me follow it now.

Bertha. What trade?

Alfred. It's called a Sovereign. I make laws, and work by rule.

Bertha. Rule! A carpenter, mayhap? . . . My husband, Gog, wants a man; he may employ you."

When later, Bertha upbraids Alfred for letting the cake become "all burned on one side," Gog enters, and grows angry, supposing they are flirting. In the Danish camp Alfred, disguised as a minstrel, contemplates stabbing the sleeping Hastings:—

"Then for a coward act to free Albion and stain the name of—
[going to strike, starts back] Ha! By Heaven! It is! The generous soldier who suffered the rage of burning thirst rather than see his humble fellow creature perish! Then England down ere

¹ *Dramatis Personæ:*

King Alfred.	Hollybush.
Hastings.	Gog.
Hubba.	Oswald.
Earl Burrhed.	Lady Albina.
Eustace.	Bertha.
Odune.	Blanche.
Anlaff.	

Earls, Knights, Saxon and Danish Soldiers, Peasants, etc.

Scene: Dorsetshire.

Alfred props thy fall by base ingratitude [*puts up the dagger, retires playing on his harp*].”

At the close Alfred institutes trial by jury to prevent such mistakes as that by which he was tempted to misjudge the faithful Eustace.

In spite of the small success of this play it became, as will be seen presently, the basis of a fairly prosperous drama some thirty years later. But before the consideration of this a popular spectacular piece, which soon followed O’Keeffe’s work, deserves notice.

LONSDALE’S ‘HISTORICAL BALLET.’

A performance at Sadler’s Wells theatre in 1798, based upon Alfred’s life, seems to have enjoyed considerable popularity, if one may judge from newspaper references to it. One of these states that “‘Alfred the Great’¹—the glory of our Saxon Kings, who is

¹*Sketch of Alfred the Great: or The Danish Invasion.* A Grand Historical Ballet of Action, with Airs, Chorusses, Etc. As performed at Sadler’s Wells.

This production is to be found with other matter relative to Sadler’s Wells in the British Museum. The “Principal Characters” are as follows:

Alfred.		Abbess of Codlingham.
Odune, <i>Earl of Devon.</i>		The Neatherd’s wife.
Ethelwolf } <i>English Generals.</i>		Judith, <i>Sister to Alfred.</i>
Osríc }		Guthrum.
Ethelward } <i>English Nobles.</i>		Haldane } <i>Danish Chiefs.</i>
Osbricht }		Hubba }
Wulfsig }		Amund }
Buthred }		Laf }
Abbot of Codlingham.		Chief Scald.
Dunwulf the Neatherd.		Page to Guthrum.
Genius of Britain.		Hastings, <i>a Danish Pirate.</i>
Queen Elswitha.		Oscitel.

In addition to the above there are “Saxon captives, Monks, Nuns, Sacristans, Leeches, Soldiers, Danish Scalds, Priests of Odin, Ministers of Sacrifice, Soldiers, Musicians, Mariners, etc. etc.”

A general account of the *Sketch* is given as follows: “The subject of the Piece is taken from that period of English History when Britain . . . was restored to its Freedom by the Wisdom and Enterprise of King Alfred, who laid the foundation of his Country’s future Fame and Greatness, by putting to sea the first English Navy.—The Scenery and Action of the Piece are chiefly directed to the following points in the Life of Alfred (*viz.*) His concealment as a peasant in the Neatherd’s Cottage,—His retreat to the Fortress in the Isle of Athelney,—

much more celebrated for his civil institutions than for his victories, and to whom we owe the inestimable privilege of trial by jury, has been produced at the Wells with all the pomp, circumstance and consequence which attach themselves to the subject. Highly to the credit of its author Mr. Lonsdale,¹ this popular exhibition, in the story of which every Englishman feels an interest, continues to be received by crowded houses with great applause. Grimaldi² is remarkably clever in it."

The performance seems to have been chiefly in pantomime, with some songs and recitative. There are twelve scenes, the last "A Grand Historical Pageant," representing incidents from the reigns of subsequent kings. The plot recalls that of earlier works. Ethelwitha and Judith are captured by Oscitel who enters the Saxon Monastery of Codrington disguised as a pilgrim. Guthrum becomes enamoured of Ethelwitha, while Oscitel believes she should be his. At the Danish banquet Alfred appears and sings as a minstrel. Ethelwitha escapes, but Judith is condemned to death. The Saxons appear at this moment. In the next scene Alfred, during "a severe famine," shares his last morsel of bread with a poor pilgrim; he makes peace with Guthrum; and directs the building of a fleet. The pilgrim then throws off his "palmer's weeds," and appearing as the "Genius of Britain" addresses him. The whole performance closes with the singing of 'Rule Britannia.'

It will be noticed from the preceding that several historical incidents are introduced, neglected by previous plays. Like the 'Masque,' which it resembles in certain aspects, this production presented the figure of Alfred at a time of strong patriotic feeling, occasioned by the war with the French. The battle of the Nile was fought in the same year.

His dividing the loaf with a poor pilgrim in the time of Famine,—His visiting the Danish camp disguised as a harper,—and the defeat of the Danes at Yattendon (!) in Hampshire. The whole interspersed with various incidental traits of the Ancient Danes and Anglo-Saxons, and of the Amusements, Habits, and Manners of the ninth century."

¹"Lonsdale, M. This gentleman, we think, was at one time machinist, and contriver of pantomimes at Sadler's Wells, and is the author of *The Spanish Rivals*, Musical Farce, 1784, and *Mago and Dago*, Pantomime, (unprinted)." Baker, *Biographia Dramatica*.

²The famous actor of pantomime, then nineteen years old. His parts were not always comic.

POCOCK'S 'ENCHANTED STANDARD.'

The author previously mentioned, who made use of O'Keeffe's 'Magic Banner' for the basis of another drama upon Alfred was Isaac Pocock, a well-known playwright of the beginning of the century, who won his greatest success in the dramatization of some of Scott's novels. In the present case Pocock's change of title was scarcely less than his change of the earlier dramatist's material. 'Alfred the Great; or, The Enchanted Standard,'¹ seems to have been favorably received at Covent Garden in 1827.

Like the 'Magic Banner,' most of this work is a broad farce, which has nothing to do with Alfred.² Edwy is now the lover of

¹ *A Musical Drama in Two Acts.* First performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, Saturday, November 3, 1827. By Isaac Pocock, Esq., author of *Rob Roy, Miller and His Men, Hit or Miss*, etc., etc.

The "Advertisement" reads: "This Afterpiece . . . is founded partly on an early drama of O'Keeffe's; but the superstructure is wholly different . . . The incidents of the disguised King spoiling the old woman's cakes—his love of Elswitha or Ethelswitha, afterwards his queen—his visit as a minstrel to the Danish camp—and the destruction of the *Reafan*—are culled from the best authorities; although varied and compressed with the license usually permitted in a melo-drama." The author also gives thanks to the performers and others, "who have rendered his piece so successful." Genest (*ut supra*, IX, 424-5) thinks that though "Pocock has improved what he has borrowed," his piece is "not so different from the *Magic Banner* as he represents it to be." (The indebtedness is even greater than Genest indicates.) According to the same author the *Enchanted Standard* was acted sixteen times.

² *Dramatis Personæ* :

Alfred, *the King of England.*

Odune, *Earl of Devon.*

Edwy, under the name of Oswald—a spy.

Graybald, *the Warden of Corfe Castle.*

Gog, *the Neatherd.*

Guthrum, *a Danish Prince.*

Hubba } *Danish Chiefs.*
Hafgar }

Osric, *the Danish Standard Bearer.*

Morac } *Danish Soldiers of Guthrum's Body guard.*
Sveno }
Fengo }

Judith, *Alfred's Sister.*

Elswitha, *Disguised as Ethelbert, the Page of Odune.*

Birtha, *Gog's Wife.*

Blanche, *Gog's Daughter.*

Blanche instead of Eustace. Guthrum holds Judith as captive, believing her to be Elswitha. The latter in the dress of a page,—a hint from the 'Sketch'—searches for Alfred, in company with Odune. Alfred only appears once in the first act, when he makes a truce with Guthrum at Corfe Castle.

Act II begins with the scene in Birtha's hut, where she is "discovered kneading dough in a large brown pan." While Birtha and Blanche are talking, a voice and harp are heard without, and a duet follows between Blanche and the stranger. Birtha is persuaded by the entreaty of Blanche, who recognizes him, to give the unknown Alfred shelter for the night.

When Birtha asks his name he answers :

"You may call me Alfred. I am a namesake of the King.

Birtha. You can't have a better. What is your trade? [*Alfred holds forth his harp, which Blanche takes gently from his hands and wipes the strings.*] Ah! that is but an idle one. Will you work for your living?

Blanche. Work! The minstrel work!

Birtha. Yes; why not?

Alfred. 'Tis the duty of all men by honest industry to earn the bread they eat.

* * * *

Birtha. Then you are hired for service. . . . While Blanche and I fodder the cattle, look you to the cakes on the hearth there; turn them often, and mind you don't burn them,—up girl to the loft.

Blanche. Directly, Mother, directly. [*Exit Birtha. Blanche has fanned the fire, turned the cakes, etc., and at Birtha's exit, takes the cap from Alfred's hand, feels it, wrings the wet, and hangs it on the arm of the settle.*]

Alfred. That girl's attentions are more than common; can she suspect?"

Blanche then timidly brings Alfred a cloak. When he asks if she recognizes him she sinks upon her knees and bursts into tears. "As Alfred raises her kindly, Bertha appears in the cowshed." Alfred then left alone soliloquises on his fate, and declares that if "in after times it may be told how Alfred filled a menial's office in the neatherd's hut . . . the selfsame page of history shall bear record that he met misfortune like a man, and bore it like a

Christian." Later Blanche shields him from her mother's wrath after the mishap of the cakes, and Gog enters and grows jealous as in the 'Magic Banner.'

Alfred is now found by Odune and Elswitha, and the latter takes service as his page, unrecognized, and fearful that, absorbed in love for his country, he has forgotten her. She accompanies him while in minstrel disguise he enters Guthrum's feast at Corfe Castle. There Alfred refuses to give his sister Judith as a wife to Guthrum. When the Danes are about to kill him the Saxons surprise the castle. The play ends with Elswitha setting fire to the standard, and the fall of the castle.

An anonymous drama,¹ which is modelled upon the works of O'Keeffe and Pocock, appeared in 1829. It does not merit further observation.

'ALFRED THE GREAT,' BY SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

The most marked success which has attended the performance of any dramatic work based on Alfred was obtained by the play of James Sheridan Knowles, the cousin of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and the friend of Lamb and Hazlitt, who is best known as the author of 'Virginius' and 'The Hunchback.'

The subject of Alfred was first suggested to the author by his friend Macready who subsequently assumed the leading rôle. In the words of the biography of Knowles, "'Alfred'² was produced at Drury Lane on the 28th of April, 1831. Its success was emphatic, but due more to political causes than to the merits of the play. William IV had just come to the throne, and the patriotic sentiments which fell from the lips of Alfred were caught by an enthusiastic audience, and attributed to the liberal king."³

¹*Alfred the Great, A drama in Five Acts.* London, 1829.

²*Alfred the Great; or The Patriot King. An Historical Play.* By James Sheridan Knowles, author of *Virginius, Caius Gracchus, and William Tell.* (London, 1831).

Also published as No. 314 of *Dicks' Standard Plays.* London.

³*Life of Knowles*, by his son, Richard Brinsley Knowles. Privately Printed (London, 1872), p. 88. The account continues: "The *Atlas* which had befriended the author so much on the failure of his comedy [*The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green*, November 22d, 1828], sternly resented the apparent clap-traps. But in

The play is in five acts, of which a synopsis follows :¹

Act I. Edith and the Danish princess, Ina, are shooting with bows and arrows, and the former has just confessed her love for the Saxon Oswith, when her father, Guthrum, returns from a victory. Oswith, who is one of the prisoners, is condemned to be sacrificed to Odin, but is spared by Guthrum at Ina's intercession.

Act II. Elswith, with Conrad, searching for the King, meet a number of Saxons, who do not recognize her, and pass on. In the next scene Alfred, as man of work in Edwin's cottage, is scolded by Maude, and allows the cakes to burn. He gives food to an old man who is starving. When Edwin returns with food, in company with Egbert and other Saxons, the unrecognized King checks a quarrel which arises among them. The Danes are heard approaching, and under Alfred's leadership, the Saxons prepare to attack them. In another scene Oddune appears with his followers and tells of the capture of the Raven Standard. Alfred speaks of

truth their coincidence with the popularity of the new monarch was wholly accidental. The play was completed while George IV was still upon the throne and only one passage was added after the accession of King William. For this play he (Knowles) received three hundred pounds. He intended to dedicate it to Hazlitt, but his old friend being dead it was dedicated by permission to the King." There follows a curious account of how Knowles was unwilling to kneel to the King when presented at Court. The Dedication reads: "Dedicated (By Permission) to His Most Gracious Majesty, William the Fourth, a Patriot Monarch, destined with the blessing of God, to restore the dilapidated fabric of his country's prosperity; and to rescue a devoted people from the ravages of the worst of invaders,—Corruption."

1

Dramatis Personæ.

English.

Alfred, *King of England.*
Oddune.
Oswith.
Edric.
Egbert.
Kenric.
Edwy.

Oswald.
Edgar.
Edwin.
Conrad.
Ethelred.
Elswith, *The Queen.*
Maude.

Danes.

Guthrum.
Amund.
Oscar.
Haldane.
Otho.

Soldier.
Priest.
Boy.
Ina, *Guthrum's daughter.*
Edith.

the treachery of the Saxon Edric, who has joined the Danes, and decides to enter the enemy's camp as a minstrel. Edwy accompanies him.

Act III. Edric is rewarded by Guthrum with the promise of Ina's hand. But the latter has already plighted her vows to Oswith when Edric makes his plea. Guthrum wishes to force his daughter's consent, and to have Oswith put to death. But upon the advice of the supposed minstrel, who is Alfred, he agrees to bestow her upon the victor of a personal combat. Oswith wins, and Edric plots revenge.

Act IV. At the feast which follows, Alfred plays before Guthrum, and Edwy sings. Elswith enters and sees her child, whom she supposed killed by the Danes, cared for by Ina. The Queen upbraids Guthrum for the sorrows of the English, and declares her identity. Alfred, however, obtains from the King the promise that his wife and child shall not be harmed, and then escapes before he is recognized by the Danes. Oswith is condemned to death for aiding him.

Act V. Ina goes mad, for the time, at the prospect of her lover's sacrifice, and determines to die with him. Meanwhile Alfred returns to the Saxons, who are waiting for him to lead them. They attack the Danes just after Oswith, about to be sacrificed, has been granted his life by Guthrum for stopping Ina, who attempted to stab herself. Guthrum is disarmed by Alfred, and granted the kingdom of Northumbria on condition that he will accept Christianity. Alfred institutes the trial by jury for the traitor Edric, and ends with a patriotic address to his subjects.

It is evident from the above that the author has adopted a general outline of plot similar to that of several of the previous dramas; also that he has composed the whole in a more acceptable manner. The easy style of the blank verse is an equal improvement upon most of the works considered. It is best in the quieter scenes, such as the opening passage, where Ina confesses her love. There is an evident advantage in giving the love-scenes to younger characters, and presenting Alfred as a father and husband.

Guthrum speaks thus of Alfred when he finds the packet which the latter has let fall :

“ A string of Saxon rhymes. Can Alfred fight?
Who flourishes the pen so much, can scarce
Be master of the sword! He plays the harp,
So they report. The harp! Give me the strain
Of the resounding shield!”

As in other of the works examined, Alfred soliloquizes while set to watch the cakes :

“ This is the lesson of dependance. Will
Thankless, that brings not profit!—labour spurn’d,
That sweats in vain; and patience tax’d the more
The more it bears. And taught unto a king—
Taught by a peasant’s wife, whom fate hath made
Her sovereign’s monitress.”

Alfred continues in a similar strain to deplore the loss of wife and child. Maude reënters, and will not accept his offer to turn the cakes :

“ You’ll break them! Know I not your handy ways?
I would not suffer thee put finger to them.
Call, when ’tis time.”

After he has failed to do this she exclaims :

“ Is this your care?
Ne’er did you dream that meal was made of corn,
Which is not grown until the earth be plough’d ;
Which is not garner’d up until ’tis cut ;
Which is not fit for use until ’tis ground ;
Nor used then till kneaded into bread?
Ne’er knew you this? It seems you never did,
Else had you known the value of the bread ;
Thought of the ploughman’s toil ; the reaper’s sweat ;
The miller’s labour ; and the housewife’s thrift ;
And not have left my barley cakes to burn
To very cinders !

Alfred. I forgot, good dame.

Maude. Forgot, good dame, forsooth! You ne’er forgot
To eat my barley cakes!”

Her sons, of all descriptions and degrees,
To succour her shall grapple soul and hand,
Rampart her throne with living walls of hearts,
And teach the fell invader that the deep
Embrac'd her, never to betray her glory!"

BURLESQUES.

The play of Knowles was made the subject of good-natured parody in a Christmas pantomime by Robert Brough in 1856.¹ There is plenty of good fun and bad puns; the whole ending with "The appearance of the Danish Fleet" and "Rule Britannia."

Brough also published a little "Christmas Drama" called 'King Alfred and the Cakes,'² which is less elaborate, but even more amusing than the pantomime.

¹ *Alfred the Great; or, The Minstrel King. An Historical Extravaganza.* By Robert B. Brough, author of *Medea, Masaniello, Siege of Troy*, etc. Printed as 644 in French's Acting Edition.

It is curious to find references to Pauli's biography in the accounts of the characters; thus Ceolwulf, who is acted by Miss Cottrel, is mentioned as "a Renegade from the Saxon cause, described in Pauli's *Alfred the Great* as 'a weak-minded Thane of the exiled King's;' but whose corporeal attributes will be found liable to no objection whatever."

² *A Cracker Bon-bon for Christmas Parties.* (London, 1852).

The same volume is published as *Burlesque Dramas, A Cracker Bon-bon*, by French (London and New York).

Alfred, "at present fulfilling a provincial engagement as a journeyman baker," fights with Guthrum, who enters as a customer. He thinks he has killed the latter, and puts him in the oven. Then,

"Good gracious, though, the cakes! I quite forgot.
Oh! here's a horrid burning shame! all hot!

* * * *

I've been and done it. Yes; there'll be a row
When Mrs. Smith comes in; she won't allow
For my neglected baking—an excuse
That I was busy cooking Guthrum's goose."

But the Dane appears alive again, saved by the loaf he had concealed under his smock-frock;

"*Alfred.* The staff of life, then, warded off my blows?
Ah, well! you must be pardoned, I suppose."

A still earlier pantomime had appeared in 1850,¹ in which the characters seem somewhat suggested by Pocock's play. At the end the "Transformation" changes Alfred into Harlequin, Ethelwitha to Columbine, Hogseye, the shepherd, to Pantaloon, and Guthrum to Clown.

But what is perhaps the best of the Burlesques upon Alfred was written before any of those mentioned. This is a little *jeu d'esprit* by Francis Egerton, Earl of Ellesmere,² in which the easy versification makes the nonsense tell excellently.

'ALFRED THE GREAT,' BY DE REDCLIFFE.

In contrast to the comic works just observed the next drama lays particular stress upon Alfred's mysterious sickness, and presents a gloomy picture of the monarch up to the time of its cure. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the eminent statesman and

¹ *Harlequin Alfred the Great! or, the Magic Banjo and the Mystic Raven*, by the author of *Bluff King Hal*. (Hailes Lacy, London).

In the scene of "The Danish Camp," Alfred, Hogseye and Sweeney enter as "Ethiopian Serenaders. Their disguise merely consists of a black dress coat, with enormously large tails, white wristbands a good way up their arms, high white collars, black masks down to the mouth, and wooly skull caps. Alfred has the banjo [the weapon of The Spirit of Hope as opposed to the Raven of The Demon of Despair], Hogseye plays a large Concertina, and Sweeney is the 'Inimitable Bones.'" Alfred proceeds to sing before Guthrum, who is making love to Ethelwitha in the orthodox fashion of the more serious dramas.

² "Alfred. A Drama. In One Act." Printed in *Poems* by the Earl of Ellesmere. (London, 1856); and in French's *Juvenile Plays for Home Performance* (London and New York).

This bit of admirable fooling, written primarily for the home circle, is described in the bibliographies of Draper and Bosworth as "A Drama in 5 Acts."

It ends with Alfred's words to Margaret (wife of Kenric, "a yeoman of good family, but reduced circumstances"):

"I shall never forget that when enemies dodged me,
When I fled from their blood-hounds, and baffled their guides,
Without asking for payment you boarded and lodged me,
And found me in coals and in washing besides;
I will make of your husband a peer of the nation,
And to make all go off with the greater *éclat*,
With Miss Edith's consent, and with your approbation,
I will make of yourself the King's sister-in-law."

diplomat, who had been accustomed to write as a means of diversion during his whole life, composed the present work¹ at the advanced age of ninety years.²

The "Preliminary Scene," and five acts of the play are as follows:³

An expedition of Danes is about to start for England when an Earl tells the daughter of Ragnor Lodbrug how her father was doomed by the Saxons to die in a den of serpents. The three sisters then weave the Raven Standard.

Act I begins with a discussion by two Saxons of the down-trodden condition of the country, and of the strange inactivity of the King. Later Cedric enters the castle to voice the discontent of the people, and is met by Ethelwolf, who advises patience. The assembled crowd then give vent to their indignation, but disperse on the arrival of the King's yeomen. Ordolf hints rebellion to Godwyn. Alfred, alone in his apartment, complains of his own lack of power and activity. Bishop Neot arrives and tries in vain to rouse him from his weakness.

¹ *Alfred the Great in Athelney. An Historical Play. With a Preliminary Scene.* By Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1876).

Of this work 250 copies were printed on Small Paper, and 25 on Large.

There is a dedication "to the ever-honoured memory of his late Royal Highness, Albert, the Prince Consort."

² For an account of other poetic works cf. Lane-Poole, *Life of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe* (London, 1888). There is, however, no mention there of the present work.

³ *Dramatis Personæ:*

Alfred, *King of Wessex.*
 Guthrum, *Danish King of Mercia.*
 Ethelwolf, *Earl-derman of the Palace.*
 Neot, *a Cornish Bishop.*
 Ordolf, *a Saxon Earl.*
 A Foster-Brother to the Earl.
 Godwyn, *a Saxon Thane.*
Danish Chiefs.
 Cedric, *a Saxon Yeoman.*
 Danulf, *a Saxon Swineherd.*
 Seneschal
 Valet
 Chamberlain
 Porter

} *in Alfred's Palace.*

Ghost of St. Cuthbert.
 Elwitha, *Alfred's Queen.*
 Godwyn's Lady.
 Githra, *Danulf's Wife.*
 Wolfrida } *Daughter of a Sea-king*
 } *and reputed Sorceress.*
 Hilda, *Cedric's Bride.*
Danish lads, Saxon girls, Sachristan,
Verger, Boatman, Clerks, Soldiers,
Peasants.

Act II. Wolfrida, the sorceress, is visited by Hilda, who tells of the dissensions among the Saxons. Guthrum also comes to ask advice of the sorceress. Saxon girls talk in the street, and are urged by Cedric to sustain their brothers and lovers in the coming struggle. Alfred and Elswitha converse, and later the King meditates on a plan to save the country. In a Government Office clerks prepare a Royal Ordinance calling together the Witan. At the palace Alfred's absence is discovered, and a council held. Ordolf plans to put the King's nephew upon the throne.

Act III. Alfred on his journey is rowed by a boatman to the island where he enters the service of Githra and Danulf. The Danes discuss the campaign, and are advised by Wulfrida to suspend their attack. Alfred, falling asleep over the cake he is to watch, arouses Githra's wrath. Hilda and Guthrum meet in Wulfrida's cave. Later Hilda, saved by Guthrum from some drunken Danes, arouses his love for her. Ordolf receives from his foster-brother news that Alfred's nephew refuses to seize the crown at once. Godwyn tells Ordolf that his treason is suspected.

Act IV. The Queen suggests to Cedric that he should seek Alfred in Athelney, where she seems to see him in a vision. Guthrum tries to make the captive Hilda yield to him, but she is rescued by Wulfrida. The schemes of Ordolf are discovered and he is taken prisoner. Cedric visits Alfred for the second time, and tells him that the Saxons desire him to lead them.

Act V. Alfred disguised as a harper sings for the Danish soldiers and Guthrum, and is allowed to view the camp. On his return to Athelney he is enthusiastically received by the Saxon troops. By a vision St. Cuthbert predicts the victory to come. In the battle Ordolf is stabbed by Wolfrida, who is in turn killed by the foster-brother of Ordolf. The Danes retreat, and the Royal Standard is captured. The besieged Danish fortress finally yields, and Guthrum begs for peace. The lovers, Cedric and Hilda, are happily united. Alfred receives the allegiance of clergy and people. In the last scene the sacristan and verger of a church discuss the conversion of the Danes. A procession enters, and a choir sings hymns of praise.

The present play's chief defect is its unnecessary length, and the number of unimportant scenes which are introduced. Among

these, perhaps, is the "Preliminary Scene," in which the Earl imagines Ragnor's fate :

" I felt the slimy chill
Of crawling reptiles, and in moving roused
The horrid vipers."

The daughter of Ragnor then bids her sisters :

" Come, weave the plumes of Odin's gifted bird,
That drooping now, and now with pride elate,
Shall warn of peril or to conquest point."

The song sung by the eldest sister ends :

" Every thread is fraught with life ;
High the Raven tow'rs !
Vengeance goads the sons of strife—
All its joy be ours."

Alfred does not appear until the end of the first act. But before that his change of conduct is described. Cedric tells how,

" In those days the king himself
Went forth to battle, and our present lord—
A youth, half-fledged—with such bright valour fought,
That none—his brothers dying—seemed more fit
To wear the crown and drive the wolves away.
Beshrew the change ! What pagan sorceress
Hath nipped so fair a promise ? "

Alfred himself, when alone, asks,

" Whence comes this weakness ? Youth accepts it not :
My years are few ; is health alone at fault ?
Well ! that may be, for since my nuptial day
The fit which then unmanned me, or its cause,
Thickens my blood, and, hag-like rides the mist
That dims my vision : am I sick at heart,
Sick for my realm beset with cruel foes ? "

When Neot declares " 'Tis witchcraft," and begs Alfred to

“Call God to aid and spurn the arts of Hell!”

he replies :

“Witchcraft or not, a helpless victim I.”

It is possible that the author first intended to make Alfred the object of Wolfrida's sorcery, but merely left his sickness the general result of “gnawing pains” and “deeper wounds than cankers of the flesh” which “rack his spirit.”

The vision by which Alfred sees the Island of Athelnay, in which he can find solitude to regain his health, is not in harmony with the extreme realism of most of the work, and his adventures in the cottage are told in a rather undignified manner for an “Historical Play.” These, like other portions, are so spun out that only a small part can be quoted. After much scolding from Githra, Alfred is left to watch the cake, and soliloquizes thus :

“A pretty job for one
Who owns a crown, and could in time and place
Put that old gossip in the grate instead
Of her fine cake

Oh! could the hearts
Of my rude folk be kneaded into shape
Like that, my oaten charge, and made to feel
The patriot's noble fire, this menial task
Would be my pride.”

After turning the cake six times Alfred sits down and falls asleep. “Githra returning, rouses him with a box on the ear. Alfred, amazed and angry, might have forgotten himself,” (!) but is appeased by Danulf “paying his termagant wife the same compliment.”

Alfred's pardon of Githra, in a later scene, is in a similar vein when pretending anger, he asks,

“Can you suppose
That any lapse of ages will erase
Th' impression made upon this ear of mine
By your loose tongue, and by your weighty hand?”

But he soon adds,

“ We drop the past, and bid you laugh
At this our wanton, solemn merriment.”

It is evident that the author's strength does not lie in “wanton, solemn merriment.” In contrast to such passages is the strong religious spirit of de Redcliffe,¹ which appears in the address of the Ghost of St. Cuthbert to the sleeping king :

“ Alfred ! my form and voice shall reach thy sense,
E'en through the mists of slumber. Look and list.
Thy pray'rs are heard, thy wise and firm resolves
Approved on high.
Gird on thy sword ; go forth in conscious might ;
My spirit, led by Him, shall move in front.”

In the battle Alfred gives as the Saxon war-cry, “God and St. Cuthbert !” After the victory Alfred declares :

“ To wisdom, learning, skill, wherever found,
I must appeal
Asser is one who stands in high repute,
And him I must secure at once.”

The foundation of Oxford is made the King's particular ambition, where,

“ By social grades, by local bounds confin'd
Shall Order reign, surmounting many a shock,
And law by freedom train'd, by use matur'd,
May haply bear some trace of Alfred's name.”

The defects of this drama are manifest. Chief among them are numerous anachronisms,² and the lack of concentrated interest.

¹ In the same year as *Alfred* appeared his *Why Am I a Christian?*

² Such as the scene which presents a “Room in a Government Office. Clerks at their several desks,” and which doubtless mirrors the author's own experiences. The Chief Clerk is much irritated by the many questions asked by the others; one wishes to know what motives are to be named for calling the Witan; another whether the bishops are to be designated by their own names

Nevertheless, the picture of the sick-minded King presents the legend of St. Neot in an impressive, if not in a pleasant manner.

‘ENGLAND’S DARLING,’ BY ALFRED AUSTIN.

This work¹ of Mr. Austin marks in an interesting manner the latest treatment of the figure of Alfred in dramatic fiction, and as such, it is not surprising to find that greater fidelity to history is one of its most distinguishing characteristics. In the Preface the author states that, “for every incident in the following poem there is a foundation, however slight, in written record or in oral hearsay, not only concerning Alfred himself, but equally as regards his brilliant son.” The Preface in question contains a sympathetic discussion of Alfred’s character and its claims on the interest of Englishmen, with quotation of tributes from a number of historians and philosophers. But in the light of the present study, Mr. Austin’s statements must surprise the reader when he declares that “the greatest of Englishmen has never been celebrated by an English poet,” and that “no Englishman has sung of Alfred the Great.”

‘England’s Darling’ is in five acts, of which the following brief summary will be useful as means of contrast with the outline of other works:²

or those of their sees; a third complains of the indistinct writing of the form he copes. The Chief Clerk then prophecies how in time,

“A test of worth,
Styled *Competition*, will set all to rights.”

A Young Clerk declares:

“He’s off!
Was ever such a prig!—too old to mend!!”

¹ *England’s Darling* (New York and London, 1896).

² *Personages*:

Alfred, <i>Surnamed the Great.</i>	Ethelnoth, <i>Eldorman of Somerset.</i>
Edward, <i>His Son.</i>	Ethelswitha, <i>Alfred’s Wife.</i>
Plegmund, <i>Archbishop of Canterbury.</i>	Ethelfrida } <i>His Daughter (married to</i>
Werefrith, <i>Bishop of Worcester.</i>	} <i>Ethelred).</i>
Ethelred } <i>Alfred’s Son-in-law (after-</i>	Edgiva, <i>A Danish Maiden.</i>
} <i>wards Eldorman of Mercia).</i>	

Although unmentioned among the above there are also introduced Grimbald, Asser and the Welsh Princess, and the Danes, Guthrum and Oskytel. It is scarcely necessary to call attention to the historical accuracy of the names in contrast with those of previous works.

Act I. In the "Saxon Fastness in Athelney" Plegmund, Ethelnoth, Werefrith, and Ethelred discuss the ravages of the Danes, but express their trust in Alfred, who is still unconquered. Alfred, disguised as a vagrant, passes Edward in the forest. Edgiva and Edward meet as lovers. The disguised King gives Edgiva the crystal jewel by which she may claim entrance to the Saxon camp. The act ends with another love-scene.

Act II. Alfred, still in disguise, helps some serfs who are at work. Later he talks with the priests about his writings. At the Witanagemote he addresses his subjects in regard to the war. Asser and a number of Welsh princes come to beg his help. In his study Alfred is shaping the long-oared boats when Edward enters and tells of his love. Edgiva, who has meanwhile lost the jewel, is brought before the King, and finds that he was the aged visitor of the previous act.

Act III. After the parting of the lovers Alfred and Edgiva set out for the Danish camp, and she tells him of the flowers on the way.

Act IV. The Danes are drinking in their camp at Ethandune, and bad omens are noticed by the Jarls. Alfred and Edgiva are led in. The former sings, and at the conclusion the English surprise the Danes. Oskytel recognizes Edgiva as the daughter of Sweyne by the bracelet on her wrist, and Alfred bids Edward take her as his bride. Ethelred arrives with news of the naval victory at Swanage, and Alfred predicts England's greatness on the sea.

The ingenious manner in which a large number of historical and legendary facts are woven into the play cannot be adequately indicated in a short summary, or by a few quotations.¹ The

¹ It will be enough to mention two examples. During the scene of the Witanagemote, in the talk of the Freemen one says of Alfred :

"Can it be true that he as lettered is
As Grimbald's self ?

Second Freeman.

Aye, ever since the day
He learned the book of pictured Saxon verse
Quickest of all his brothers, he hath stored
His mind with written lore.

author admits the liberties which he has taken in making such changes as to cause Alfred, by word of mouth, to bestow Wantage and Athelney upon his wife, and to manumit his slaves, when these were only provisions of his will; "he has not hesitated to antedate those and other incidents of his Rule, and, in a word, to compress into a period of a few weeks the most striking events of a lifetime."

An interesting difference of this work from those which have appeared earlier is the attempt to reproduce the feeling of the times by the use of archaic language. In a similar manner Alfred's minstrel songs imitate the alliteration and measure of Anglo-Saxon poetry :

" In the Beginning when, out of darkness,
The Earth, the Heaven,
The stars, the seasons,
The mighty mainland
And whale-ploughed water,
By God the maker
Were formed and fashioned,
Then God made England."

In regard to the general outlines of the story it is significant that Mr. Austin, although ignorant of any previous English poem

Third Freeman.

I mind me, too,
How in his boyhood was there none more deft
To cope a haggard peregrine," etc.

Alfred says to Edward :

" Nay, but let me tell,
For your soul's hale, that in my own hot youth,
Flesh with the spirit was so sore at war,
I prayed to God he would in kindness send
Some sickness that might chasten this base fire,
And make me rule-worthy; for he who lives
Thrall unto fleshly bondage is not fit
To be the lord of others; and God sent
A scourge so sharp that I again besought
Some milder stroke,—not blindness, leprosy,
Nor any hurt unworthy of a King,—
And in His goodness He then laid on me
The burden that you know."

upon Alfred, follows the same methods adopted by a number of previous writers. The love story of Edward and Edgiva, with the dream of the light shining in her body, had appeared as early as the 'Deliverer of His Country' of 1753; and the appearance of Alfred as a minstrel before Guthrum, with the immediately following attack of the English as a climax has been observed in numerous plays.¹ Mr. Austin's good taste naturally shrinks from laying much stress upon the hackneyed incident of the cakes, but even here Edgiva's intercession with her mother² recalls that of Blanche in Pocock's 'Enchanted Standard.' So the adoption of the Nestingus legend for Edgiva's parentage resembles its use by O'Keeffe for Eustace. These facts are worth noticing because they show the really narrow confines within which fiction upon Alfred must proceed. Mr. Austin has, however, certainly succeeded in using the material in such a way as to come nearer a reproduction of Alfred's life and times than any previous author.

But in spite of this success it cannot be denied that the passages of 'England's Darling' which are of greatest poetic worth are undoubtedly those which describe Nature, not Alfred. The setting of the whole is Pastoral, and in the allusions to English country the author is happiest. In this regard there is a certain analogy to Thomson's 'Masque,' which in a somewhat similar way—in spite of its inferior conception—is most successful when it touches the region of Nature poetry, in which lies the poet's favorite vein.³

¹ It is mentioned in this regard by Milton. *Vide infra* under General Mention.

² [Edgiva entering, finds her mother upbraiding Alfred for allowing the cakes to scorch.]

Nay, mother, but you must not flout him thus.
 Heed his gray hairs, look on his furrowed brow,
 And that strange something which nor you, nor I,
 Nor any of the level breed of folk,
 Have in their seeming.

³ Mr. Austin's work received some rather severe criticism. The *New York Nation* (June 4, 1896, p. 437) remarks that it "has at least a good subject, and may be praised on the basis recognized by that good woman who admired her pastor because he had such beautiful texts. The play is, indeed, best compared with others whose scene is laid at a period somewhat similar—as for instance Sir Henry Taylor's *Edwin the Fair*, to which it is certainly far inferior in interest or action, and strikingly so in the beauty and effectiveness of its lyric passages."

SUBSEQUENT EPICS.

HENRY JAMES PYE.

Unlike the dramas upon Alfred, which have been seen to appear in a tolerably regular succession since about the middle of the eighteenth century, no epic followed that of Blackmore until the year 1801. Two long poems made Alfred their hero in that year, however, and since then the last century has produced four more epics bearing his name. Though fewer in number than the dramatic works, it will be perceived that if length counts as an excellence these epics are the most imposing monuments erected to Alfred in literature. Blackmore's was seen to contain twelve books, Pye's has six, 'The Vision of Alfred'—although this can hardly be claimed as a real epic of Alfred—has eight books, Pitchford's poem twelve, Kelsey's twenty-four, and Fitchett's forty-eight!

In the dedication of his 'Alfred'¹ Pye, whose name lives in the ridicule of Byron as Blackmore's does in that of Pope, declares

The *Academy* (April 11, 1896, p. 298) after noting the Laureate's ignorance of his predecessors, Pye and Cottle, declares that "one cannot say that Mr. Austin has succeeded, but his failure is not wholly to be charged upon himself." The reviewer, Mr. George Cotterell, considers that it is because Alfred's character is so flawless that it is unfit for dramatic treatment. (See his words quoted later in the Conclusion of this Dissertation.) "But while Mr. Austin's failure is in part due to the character of his subject, it is also in part attributable to his limitations. He is essentially an idyllic poet, but he has attempted here a dramatic achievement and the result is that he has produced neither drama nor idyll, but a work which has only the form of the one with only the partially suggested quality of the other. . . . His King Alfred, and his Edward and Edgiva and the rest, are lay figures without any real personality. . . . King Alfred we know in nursery story and in history, but we do not know him in Mr. Austin's poem. Here he is a featureless shade and a bodiless voice. And the whole structure of the poem is as unreal as the personages are. It is like a picture on a screen; there is a succession of scenes but no movement; we are told that certain things happen but do not realize the event Nevertheless the poem has its charms. When Mr. Austin forgets that he is trying to produce a drama, and is content to be pastoral and idyllic, he succeeds admirably He succeeds again in the thrilling verses which Alfred declaims in praise of England, when disguised as a minstrel, he gains admission to the Danish camp."

¹ *Alfred; An Epic Poem, in six books.* (London, 1801).

that his poem, composed for some time, has been kept to bestow on it "all the advantages . . . in the powers of industry." This Poet-laureate would doubtless have been not a little shocked to know that his successor in office, some hundred years later, would declare that "no Englishman had sung of Alfred," when his own *magnum opus* had as its subject "The Founder of the Jurisprudence, the Improver of the Constitution, and the Patron of the Literature of his Country."

The first book of the Epic begins with the entrance of a stranger into the hall of Gregory of Scotland's castle at Forteviot.¹ This proves to be Alfred, who tells of his defeat at Wilton through the treachery of Ceolph, and of his search for the lost Elsitha.

Book II. Donald, the son of Gregory, sails with an army to aid Alfred in England. All are shipwrecked, and Alfred makes his way alone to a hospitable peasant's cottage.

Book III. Alfred and the peasant family now retire to Athelney. Here he meets a seer, who predicts the future history of England, and ends with a description of her glory and commerce under the Georges.

Book IV. Alfred learns of Oddune's victory and capture of the Raven. He plays the part of the minstrel spy and, learning that Elsitha is in a near cloister, arrives in time to save her from the Danes. Donald and his soldiers, who have escaped from the shipwreck, appear, and the Scotch Prince experiences a hopeless though respectful passion for Elsitha.

Book V. Ceolph tells of the cruel treatment of himself and daughter by the once friendly Danes. The Saxons rout the Danes at Eddington, where Ceolph, Donald, Hubba, and Hinguar are all slain.

Book VI. The Danes are pursued to Ashdown. Emma, the daughter of Guthrum, is captured, disguised as a soldier, but is recognized by her lover, the English warrior, Edgar. Guthrum, impressed by Alfred's generosity in allowing him to ransom his daughter, yields and is baptized. The Druid again prophesies the greatness of England, and the poem ends with a eulogy of Alfred.

¹Holinshed, whom Pye mentions among his authorities, says that Alfred sent ambassadors to Gregory of Scotland and made treaties with him. *History of England*, p. 148; *History of Scotland*, p. 142. (London, 1587).

Pye must be admitted to have attempted a picture of Alfred according to his powers to reproduce it from the historical material at hand. His notes refer to a considerable number of authorities, among which Spelman's *Life*, of course, holds an important position. But in spite of this erudition, the Alfred of Pye is only a trifle less unreal than that of Blackmore. Like the latter, from whom certain incidents seem drawn, he clothes his hero in impossible valor and virtue :

“His guardian shield extends and scatters far,
With godlike arm the threatening ranks of war,
As lightening swift around his faulchion flies,
At every stroke a Danish warrior dies.”

Yet when the peasant woman discovers that she has scolded the King,

“With friendly jest her terror he beguiles,
And rallies all her doubts in sportive smiles.”

In the author's stilted language the disguised King “pours sweet Melody's enchanting strain” in the Danes' camp, and “as he warbles meditates the war.” But the poet's historical sense is such that he adds a note here to say that, since the minstrel story is not mentioned by Asser, he has not considered it proper to let the subsequent victory depend upon that enterprise.

In a note is mentioned ‘The Battle of Eddington’ by John Penn, “the friend of the author,” and the part played by Ceolph (Ceoluph) seems suggested from that source. Other incidents are either invented or repeat the usual legends, such as those of the institution of tithings and of Oxford. Pye is at least modest ;

“If not by Genius, fired by Patriot zeal.”

But in spite of this and of his painful accuracy (according to his own lights) in history one is only strongly reminded of the immortal line,

“Better to err with Pope than shine with Pye.”¹

¹ “But hold” exclaims a friend,—“here's some neglect :
This—that—and t'other line seem incorrect.”

JOSEPH COTTLE.

This bookseller, who deserves the recognition of posterity since through him Coleridge and Wordsworth were enabled to publish their 'Lyrical Ballads,' was fixed in the opinion that he was himself a poet. Like Pye, Cottle first brought out his epic in the year 1801; like him he offered his patriotism and industry as evidence of the excellence of his poetry; and like him was held up to scorn by the young author of 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.'¹ But while Pye's heroic couplets represent the surviving influence of the classical school, Cottle was an enthusiastic admirer of the new ideas of his friends Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. His epic is in blank verse which exhibits in a marked degree many of the failings of the new school.

Cottle brought out no less than four editions of his epic, the first of which was a folio, and is mentioned by Charles Lamb as

What then? the self-same blunder Pope has got
And careless Dryden—"Ay, but Pye has not:—"
Indeed!—'tis granted, faith!—but what care I?
Better to err with Pope than shine with Pye.

—Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

¹ "If commerce fills the purse, she clogs the brain,
And Amos Cottle strikes the Lyre in vain.
In him an author's luckless lot behold,
Condemn'd to make the books which once he sold—

* * * *

Oh, pen perverted, paper misapplied!
Had Cottle still adorn'd the counter's side,
Bent o'er the desk, or, born to useful toils,
Beén taught to make the paper which he soils,
Plough'd, delved, or plied the oar with lusty limb,
He had not sung of Wales, or I of him."

Byron adds in a note: "Mr. Cottle, Amos, Joseph, I don't know which, but one or both, once sellers of books they did not write, and now writers of books they do not sell, have published a pair of epics—*Alfred* (poor Alfred! Pye has been at him too!)—*Alfred* and the *Fall of Cambria*." To which Cottle replied with a very severe *Expostulatory Epistle to Lord Byron* (1820) in which that poet is described:

"Mangling like some voracious Tiger blind
Whome'er he deems the humbler of his kind."

the "magnificent Guinea Alfred."¹ Although the author claims in the last edition that this is so re-written as to be "in the substantial sense *a new work*"—Cottle is a constant user of italics in verse and in prose—in reality its chief addition consists of numerous notes. Each edition, however, contains a new Preface, in which the author's views are set forth at great length.

The story told by the twenty-four books of the epic may be outlined as follows :

Book I. Ivar about to leave Denmark for England is shown the sight of many and awful horrors by a sorceress, as a punishment for having slain a mariner. In consequence he swears never to kill an unarmed person in England. (For which reason he spares Alswitha's life several books later.)

Book II. Alfred in Somersetshire dismisses his subjects for the time and goes into solitude, after appointing Selwood Forest as a future place of meeting. The next book tells of his meeting a beggar, with whom Alfred divides his loaf of bread. Two books follow describing Alfred's life in the neatherd's cottage.

Book VI tells how the mad bishop Sigbert is taken prisoner by Guthrum. Alfred reassembles his subjects, the description of which, with tales of the Danish cruelty by Ceolric and Sigbert lasts until book X, when the Danish fleet is burned. Subsequent books tell how Oddune flies from Kenwith Castle, which is captured by Ivar, and how Hubba and Guthrum quarrel. A book (XIII) is given to Alfred's visit to a Woodman, and three are taken to recount that to the Danish camp.

Book XVIII relates Guthrum's defeat at Edington, but he does not yield until four books later. Meanwhile Alswitha, who

¹ After the folio of 1801 (not in the British Museum) the subsequent editions are as follows :

Alfred; An Epic Poem, in Twenty-four Books. Second Edition. London: Printed for T. N. Longman and O. Rees, Paternoster-row, by J. Mills, Bristol. 1804. 2 vols. 12°

Alfred. Third Edition. London: Printed for Button & Son, Paternoster-Row. By Mary Bryan, Bristol. 1816. 2 vols. 12°

Alfred: An Heroic Poem, in Twenty-four Books. Fourth Edition. London: Printed for Longman, Brown, Green & Longman's. Paternoster Row. 1850. 8° In this edition the notes mention no less than sixty authorities.

An American edition in 2 vols. was published at Newburyport in 1814.

has been a captive, is given her liberty, and later converts Guthrum to Christianity. Book XXIII is occupied with "The Vision of the Guardian Angel," who exhorts Alfred to moral conduct, and finally, the last book ends with the "King's last address to his troops."

It will be seen from the above that the great length of this work does not depend so much on the invention of fresh incidents as on the great diffuseness with which everything is related. This, with the "simplicity" of language which Cottle defends in his Preface, is exhibited in the following passage describing the meeting of Alfred and Alswitha with the beggar, who begins :

" 'For I am poor, and hunger in my breast
Aloud doth call for bread. Have ye no food
To give an *old* man?' 'Yes,' the King replied,
And thou shalt have a part.' Alswitha said,
'A small part, husband, for thou knowest well
How scarce it is,' " etc., etc.

When Alfred seeks employment of the peasant Ceolric and his wife Acca, the conversation runs :

" 'Where hast thou lived? Can'st spin? or shear the sheep?
Or mend a fishing net?—Can'st carry wood?'
'Aye, that I *can* do,' cried the King with joy:
'For I have strength enough.' "

Later Acca declares he shall touch no food until he has "eaten all the black-burnt cakes."

A very different style of language, however, is used for such scenes as where Alfred plays the part of a mad minstrel :

" Wildly cried the King,
(Supporting still the maniac's character)
'I ride upon the winds, or 'tween the waves,
And mid the howling storm, recline myself
As all were quiet!'"

But for Cottle as a romanticist of the Monk Lewis type, the

first book, which seems particularly to have impressed Lamb,¹ should be mentioned. Here Ivar is rowed to the home of the sorceress by the man he has murdered, and descends into the cave by a rope of snakes! He describes the sorceress thus:

“ Her winding-sheet was snow, her coffin stone.
I would have spoken, but when I beheld
Her still and livid visage, and her eye
That through the thin, thin eyelid half appear'd,
Back I recoil'd unconscious.”

One more such passage may be mentioned, as it is made merry of in a typically slashing article of the ‘Quarterly Review.’² The passage reads:

“ Dig thou a pit
Immeasurably deep, 'neath yon huge hill
For thee and for thy subjects.—I will stand
At the dark mouth, and yell a withering tune,
A tune about the Danes and their mad deeds
That shall put all to flight, saveimps of hell.”

The Reviewer declares that the mad priest, Sigbert, who speaks, represents Cottle himself, and proceeds as follows: “That the imps read Alfred is more than we can assert of our own knowledge.

¹ “Now I am *touching* so deeply upon poetry, can I forget that I have just received from Cottle a magnificent copy of his *Guinea Alfred*. Four and twenty books to read in the dog-days! I got as far as the Mad Monk the first day and fainted. Mr. Cottle's genius strongly points him to the *Pastoral*, but his inclinations divert him perpetually from his calling. He imitates Southey as Rowe did Shakespeare . . . Instead of *the king, the hero*, he constantly writes, *he the king, he the hero, two flowers of rhetoric palpably from the Joan*. But Mr. Cottle soars a higher pitch: and when he is original, it is in a most original way indeed. His terrific scenes are indefatigable. Serpents, asps, spiders, dead bodies, staircases made of nothing, with adder's tongues for bannisters. What a brain he must have! He puts as many plums in his pudding as my grandmother used to do;—and then his emerging from Hell's horrors into light, and treading on pure flats of this earth—for twenty-three books together.” *Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. Ainger, (London, 1888), vol. I, p. 138. Lamb also tells how he “beslabber'd *Alfred* with most unqualified praise” in order to cheer the spirits of Cottle, who had recently lost his brother Amos. (*Ibid.*, p. 141).

² Vol. xc, p. 333. The article is a very hecatomb of “Recent Epics,” and begins with those upon Alfred by Cottle and Fitchett.

We merely remark that there have been four editions of the poem, that four copies were never seen in circulation by mortal man, and that the remaining three thousand nine hundred and ninety-six have certainly gone somewhere. But except the audience selected by the artist, and the poor wretches in the pit who cannot get out, not a soul we fear has withstood the withering influence of the tune. The opening of the yell was quite sufficient for ourselves."

'SCIENCE REVIVED, OR THE VISION OF ALFRED.'

This work¹ is not properly speaking a poem dealing with Alfred. It is concerned with the progress of "Science"—of civilization in the language of today—and Alfred merely appears as the patient spectator to whom the "Goddess of Science" reveals a panorama of history. At the beginning Alfred invokes

"Science! to whom the Virtues owe their birth,
With every pleasing grace that gladdens earth."

After the Goddess and her Sylphs appear he merely asks a few questions, and listens. When they enter the "Pallace of Genius" the Goddess declares,

"Nor have my cares been vain.
Thy youthful strength has crush'd the Savage Dane,
Full fifty times his thickest battle torn,
And victory's standard through his legions borne."

A note adds that "historians relate that Alfred engaged the Danes in fifty-six pitched battles, with various success, though generally victorious."

On two occasions Alfred expresses himself with some vigor; when he arraigns, in a severe manner, the conduct of James II,

¹*Science Revived, or The Vision of Alfred. A Poem in Eight Books.* London: Printed by Cox, Son, and Baylis, Great Queen Street for J. A. Gamean and Co. Albemarle Street, Piccadilly. 1802. 4^o.

Opposite to the title page is an engraving in which Alfred, in Roman dress, reclines asleep at the foot of a tree. The "Goddess of Science" and her "Sylphs" float in the air.

In the bibliographies appended to the works of Draper and Bosworth this poem is credited to "Rev. J. Simpson."

who "merits all he suffers;" and when he is so carried away with enthusiasm at Michael Angelo's work as to disparage Hellenic art:

"Then thus the Queen, his heat reproving, 'Cease
Nor with unhallow'd lips depreciate Greece.'"

JOHN FITCHETT.

In the review of Cottle's poem already alluded to, another epic of Alfred¹ is handled with no less severity. This curiosity of literature is chiefly the work of John Fitchett, a solicitor of Warrington, and was completed by his friend Robert Roscoe of Liverpool. The number of books is forty-eight, of lines more than one hundred and thirty-one thousand, and it is supposed to be the longest poem in the world!

In the Preface, which introduces this tremendous production its editor tells how "the following Poem, having been projected by the author at a very early period of his life, after he had bestowed upon it many years of unwearied application, was approaching nearly to its conclusion, when it was interrupted by his indisposition, and unfortunately left, but only to a small extent, incomplete at his death." At first, it is added, Fitchett proposed following "the stricter rules of the Classical Epic," but later he adopted "more of the character of an Epic Romance." That the original author's song intended no middle flight is obvious: "In this light his work must be regarded not merely as a Poem, but as a biography of the Monarch, a history of his age, and an epitome of its antiquities, its topography, mythologies, and civil and military conditions." And further, "into every part of his vast enterprise it will be seen that he carried the same spirit of unwearied industry and accurate research. Almost every spot which had been the scene

¹ *King Alfred. A Poem.* Edited by Robert Roscoe. London, William Pickering. 1841. 6 vols. 8°

"*King Alfred* was first printed at Warrington for private circulation at intervals between 1808 and 1834, in five quarto volumes. . . . [Fitchett] rewrote part of the work but did not live to finish it. He left money for printing a new edition, and the work of supervising it was undertaken by his pupil, clerk and friend, Robert Roscoe (son of William Roscoe of Liverpool)." *Life of Fitchett in Dict. Nat. Biog.*

of the events he celebrates, he visited in person. . . . In the collection of books, and in the investigation of the antiquities of that period, he omitted nothing which might reflect a clearer light upon his subject."

The Preface proceeds to give a picture—pathetic although unconsciously so—of the humble solicitor who for forty years laboured at this poem, known only to a few friends. "On the merits or defects of the Poem," concludes the writer of the Preface, "it is not within the province of the Editor to dwell." He thinks, at least, it offers "one of the most remarkable examples of sustained mental energy and unflinching resolution in the pursuit of a great object, which the annals of the human intellect can supply."

It is impossible to give any idea here of the numberless incidents and names which are introduced throughout this work. Like Cottle, Fitchett delights in relating long imaginary accounts of the adventures of persons who have really no bearing on the story of Alfred proper.

The first book begins when the Danish leaders, Guthrum, Oskital, and Amund have broken their peace with the Saxons, and storm the city of Wareham. The Danes are induced to do this by "the infernal powers," who are anxious to destroy Christianity and its resulting blessings. A war in Heaven thus accompanies the struggles of Danes and Saxons, and Satan and Michael, with their respective hosts, are continually bringing aid to one or the other army. Numerous visions are employed by both the demons and angels to give encouragement to their mortal followers. After many battles and adventures, Alfred is forced to retire, in book VII, to "the sequestered cottage of Denulph, an old servant, now a neat-herd." Here he tells the story of his early life, which includes journeys to Ireland and Scotland, and here, in disguise, he has many adventures. When the Danes burn the cottage, Alfred and his friends live in a "subterranean cave." New arrivals constantly appear, and each of these contributes long stories of his adventures. Meanwhile the Danes, assisted by the Demons, continue their search for Alfred. While the traitor Hianfrid is in terror at the appearance of a spectre "which assumes the form of his dead benefactor Edric," Alfred and his friends at Athelney hold conversations "illustrative of the different

conditions of human life, and the true ends of philosophy and religion." Moreover, while "Asser and Erigin enlarge on the classical authors of Greece and Rome," and Plegmund and Grimbald "explain portions of the Scripture," several love affairs develop. The argument to book XXXI tells of the "Progress of the passion subsisting between Prince Ædhelm and Matilda, Albert and Hilda, Athelhard and the Queen of Mercia." That of Guy of Warrick for the beautiful Felicia is less fortunate than the others, owing to her father, Rohand, "holding in disdain the mercantile pursuits of Guy."

In book XLIII Alfred finally leaves the isle of Athelney. In book XLVI "the great battle of Edington begins." With the next book ends the work of Fitchett, and the conclusion of the faithful editor follows, although, as he intimates, in narrower compass than the original author desired. The "disappointed Demons" raise a final tempest, and are put to flight for the last time by the Angels. Guthrum is baptized, and receives the Princess Thora, Alfred's niece, as his bride, and so closes this "remarkable example of sustained mental energy."

The 'Quarterly' Reviewer declares that many of Fitchett's verses "are not to be read upon any system of metre with which we are acquainted, and we half suspect that his poetical works must have got mixed with his prose." But this is, perhaps, too harsh judgment. The author is in truth so close an imitator of many poets, and of Milton in particular,¹ that his work is for the most part free from such absurdities of style as Cottle exhibits. After Milton, Thomson is oftenest copied, while the author's simple realism seems at times to reflect Wordsworth :

"Pleased with the tranquil home, full oft he [Alfred] marks
The Dame's employment and unclouded life :
Observes her by her swift and purring wheel
Spin thread of wool, or hair ; or cautious knit
Old Denulph's hose of red or rustic blue."

¹Such is the account of the journey of Satan to and from Hell:

"Meanwhile the infernal Monarch, on his flight
Arrived within his dreadful world, explored
The hidden region where exalted stood
His vast o'ershadowing throne," etc., etc.

RICHARD KELSEY.

The author of the next epic¹ to be considered introduces himself as "an obscure, plodding man of business." Kelsey declares that, "throughout nearly a thousand years, no one has arisen to do justice to the subject which he has selected; perhaps it is impossible adequately to discourse of one who so well deserved the epithet, Great, but it will even be something consolatory, should it be said that he has failed in a worthy cause." At considerable length the Preface shows the author's reasons for using Northern mythology and supernatural agencies, and ends by asking "consideration for the rude effort of an isolated and unlettered man." This phrase justly describes the work, which is worse than Fitchett or Cottle,—worse even than Blackmore!

Like Fitchett, Kelsey shows an evident desire to write a Miltonic war of angels and devils in connection with Alfred's story. "Michaël and Raphaël are sent down to Earth," in book V, "and observed by Satan, who proceeds to counteract them." In the meanwhile Hubba has attacked Kynoit and been in turn defeated by the Saxons. In book VII "Raphaël induces Denulf to seek Alfred, then, by a vision leads the King to repentance." Alfred now retires to Æthelingöe, from which he visits Guthrum's feast. After the victory of Ethandun mutiny appears in the Danish camp, and after more fighting by mortals and supernatural hosts, the Demons flee and Hrafn (the Raven standard) is finally destroyed.

The most marked characteristics of this author's remarkable verse are its lack of scansion, and a trick of repeating the same word over and over. Thus:

"Ragnar the proud,
The daring, the dauntless; Ragnar the warrior bard,
Ragnar the king among kings, Ragnar whose spear
Rejoiced every tribe of heaven
Had exultingly cried 'revenge'!—'Revenge, revenge,'
As with one tongue they cried."

The same page repeats the word *revenge* *ten* additional times.

¹*Alfred of Wessex.* Printed by Francis William Ticehurst, Battle, Sussex. 1852. 2 vols.

JOHN WATKINS PITCHFORD.

The last epic which has appeared upon Alfred is undoubtedly superior to any of its predecessors, no less in the manner in which the narrative is told than in the language used for its expression. But like the earlier poems Mr. Pitchford's '*Ælfred*'¹ has the fault of unnecessary length, and would gain much by condensation.

The first of the twelve books tells of the Danes, recently victorious at Chippenham. Guthrum meets the treacherous Welsh Prince Mordred, who wishes to betray Alfred. In the next book are introduced Alfred and his immediate followers, who are hiding with him in Selwood forest. While the King is reflecting on his early sins, Neot appears and receives his expressions of penitence. The quarrels of the Danes are described, and Alfred's determination to enter their camp as a minstrel. Meanwhile Mordred leads a party of Danes to where he expects to find Alfred, and a conflict follows, in which the attackers are repulsed. In the sixth book is described Alfred's visit to the Danes, from which he returns to rally his forces. The rest of the poem tells of the preparation for the battle of Ethandune, the victory there, in which Neot plays a prominent part, and the subsequent parleying and treaty with the Danes.

The author displays a considerable knowledge of the history of his subject, although there is nothing like the use made of it in the work of Mr. Austin. It is interesting to find that like de Redcliffe, the present author employs the story of St. Neot to the detriment of the King's early character, and to the glory of that saint. In the manner of St. Cuthbert, Neot, who is here Alfred's own brother, first appears as a poor stranger, and receives the half of the loaf and wine, and then visits Alfred and reproaches him for his pride.

“ ‘Brother,’ replied the king, ‘a penitent
I stand; a self-accusing man; thy words;—
For that my heart is broken quite,—wound not.’ ”

¹ *Ælfred*, by John Watkins Pitchford. London: May be had of the author, 110, St. George's Road, S. E.

There is no date to this work, but it has apparently been published within the last ten years.

Later, at the battle of Ethandune, the Saint wins the day, as is recorded in his Life, when,

“Riding beside the Saxon King was seen
A white-cowled form, with crucifix in hand,
Whose raiment glistened like the noon-day sun,
And as he raised his hand, sudden arose
Confusion mid the Danes.”

In the final parting of the brothers, which ends the poem, Neot tells how his heart was melted to hear Ælfred baptize Guthrum with his own former name of Athelstan. After his farewell his leaving is described :

“Then, gliding through the tapestry,
Went forth, nor more was seen again on earth.
Softly the lamplight glowed ; still on the floor
King Ælfred lay upon his face in prayer.”

PROSE WORKS.

Two curious works, already incidentally mentioned, treat Alfred in a semi-historical manner, but are best regarded as fiction for the present purpose. Both appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century ; the one by a German, the other by a French author.

Albrecht von Haller attempted to express his views upon government in a trilogy of works, of which that upon Alfred¹ is the

¹ *Alfred, König der Angel-Sachsen*, von Albrecht von Haller. Göttingen und Bern. 1773.

Usong. Eine Morgenländische Geschichte (Bern, 1771) pictures an absolute monarchy. *Fabius und Cato, ein Stück der Römischen Geschichte* (Bern und Göttingen, 1774) deals with a republican form of government. In the last work Haller discards the semi-fictitious treatment of the other two.

The translation of Haller's *Alfred* by Steinitz bears the title-page :

The Moderate Monarchy, or Principles of the British Constitution, described in a Narrative of the Life and Maxims of Alfred the Great and his Counsellors. From the German of Albert v. Haller. To which are added Notes and Commentaries on the Present State of the British Constitution. By Francis Steinitz, author of *The Ship, its Origin and Progress.* (London, 1849).

second, and is intended to represent the condition of a country under a limited monarchy. The first three books of this volume deal respectively with Alfred's wars, laws and literary work, and are based upon Spelman's *Life*. In the fourth is introduced Amund, the son of Arwid, and friend of the Danish warrior, Hastings. While travelling in the East Amund weds Theopane, a Grecian princess and sister of the wife of Hastings. The sisters are captured by the Saxons at Beamfleet, and Alfred's treatment of them is so generous that Amund becomes his friend and counsellor. Through this character Haller expresses his views of monarchy at length. In the fifth book—"Die Reisen Othars,"—the journey of Othere is treated with equally free imagination.

The sixth book—"Alfred's erste Liebe"¹—tells how Alfred, disguised, and known as Wulf, is wounded during one of his attacks upon the Danes, and carried by his companions to the castle of Edelbert, whose daughter, the beautiful Alswitha, dresses his wounds. He becomes deeply enamoured,² and uses his skill as a minstrel, and the stories of his travels and wars to obtain her interest. When he leaves she admits that only his lack of rank stands in the way of her accepting him in marriage.

The translation follows the original closely, and is generally accurate. The order of the books is changed. A note to the new Preface reads: "The sixth book of Haller's *Alfred* contained Alfred's love, which, although we do not consider it as worthy of its author, we have given in the second book. The Introduction and the Conclusion are . . . extracted from the works of John von Müller." Steinitz expresses his strongly conservative political views in many of the 182 notes which he has added. For the historical matter in these he makes acknowledgment to *Six Old English Chronicles*, and *Life and Times of Alfred*, by Giles.

¹ Haller's source is not clear. He says: "Die ernsthafte Geschichte hat dieser Liebe keinen Raum gegönt. Die Sage allein hat ihr Angedenken unter den Namen Edgar und Emma erhalten, eines uralten Liedes, das dennoch auch zu unsern Zeiten die Rührung erweckt."

² "Seine Wunde bedurfte heilender Sorgen, und oft legte Alswitha selbst die milde Hand an. Wulf schlug nunmehr die Augen auf und sah die zärtliche Bemühung der edlen Fräulein; ihre Tugend, ihre Schönheit, ihr gütiges Theilnehmen an seinem Unglücke, . . . täglich fand er neue Ursachen Alswithen zu lieben; ihr sanfte Stimme, ihre liebreiche Unschuld, der Reiz ihrer Züge, der Anstand ihrer Sitten, nahmen ihn so unumschränkt ein, dass er fühlte er würde si niemals verlassen können, ohne unglücklich zu werden."

Later, when Alfred gives a great feast, after his final victory, Alswitha is invited to distribute the prizes to the knights at the tournament. She recognizes Wulf as the King; he again presses his suit; and the simple and pretty love story ends happily.

In amusing contrast to the preceding is the love affair of Alfred told in the little 'Anecdote' of d'Arnaud,¹ from which one of the English dramas was seen to be drawn.

Alfred is praised as an example of how much greater are virtuous than warlike monarchs: "Voici une de ses actions de justice, qui plus que tous ses faits d'armes oubliés depuis tant de siècles, lui assurent une mémoire éternelle!" Journeying once with his trusty attendant Ethelbert, Alfred stops for the night at the house of D'Albanac, and is there much taken with the charms of Ethelwitha,² one of the host's three daughters. D'Albanac becomes suspicious, and confides his fears to his wife: "Mon honneur! . . . à cette idée seule la raison m'abandonne! plutôt cent fois ma mort, et celle de toute ma famille!" Meanwhile Ethelbert, like a true courtier, urges the King on. Early the next morning D'Albanac, sword in hand, appears leading his three daughters clothed in black, and explains to Alfred how death is preferable to dishonor. The King is silent for a moment, and then exclaims, "D'Albanac, vous rappelez Alfred à lui-même. J'auerois pu m'égarer: vous m'avertissez de mon devoir . . . Mon choix est fait. Belle Ethelwitha, voici ma main: l'acceptez vous?" And so all ends happily for this Alfred of French *Sensibilité*.

¹ *Délassements de l'Homme Sensible ou Anecdotes Diverses* (Paris 1783). 12°.

François Thomas de Baculard d'Arnaud (1718-1805), author of *Épreuves du Sentiment*. "Baculard d'Arnaud, a young poet, who was thought to have given promise of great things, had been induced to quit his country and reside at the Prussian Court." Macaulay's *Essay on Frederic the Great*.

² Compare the following with Haller's description of Alswitha:

"Les regards du Roi revenoient toujours vers Ethelwitha, et il se récrioit successivement sur sa taille souple et deliée, sur sa bouche de rose, ses cheveux blonds, ondoyant avec grace sur ses épaules, son front d'albâtre, la rondeur élégante de son col de cygne," etc.

The whole story marks the final elaboration of Asser's grim "et se a carnali desiderio abstinere non posse cerneret." The influence of William of Malmesbury's legend of Edward and Egwina is also apparent.

A number of prose works¹ of a much later date than those just considered also require a brief mention. The first, of these is perhaps the best: 'The Chronicle of Ethelfled' by Anne Manning (Mrs. Rathbone).² It is supposed to be written by a sister of Ethel-switha, who later enters a nunnery and becomes Abbess of Wareham. Of Alfred's faults and sickness she writes, "Holy Neot, indeed, who was then much at court, and forever preaching to and at the King, did enlarge much on his hardness of heart in not relieving every case of distress that came in his way, and whenever he had a pain or an ache insisted that it was a judgment on him: but, I trow the good man rather . . . exceeded in the matter." Certainly a very reasonable explanation of the whole affair! Alfred is pictured in a pleasant manner; he writes prescriptions, and borrows the Durham Book from the monks of Lindisfarne,—although they refuse to sell it to him,—and rescues the Abbess when attacked by the Danes. The work is "in the modern vernacular save in the occasional use of an archaistic expression," and shows considerable knowledge of the history and legends of the subject.

Less successful is a rather dull book for boys entitled 'The Danes in England. A Tale of the days of King Alfred,'³ in which the hero is Leowulf, the son of Ceolwulf, the traitor of Mercia. The heroine is Thornhilda, daughter of the Danish chief. This motif of a Saxon-Danish love affair, which has been observed in the works of Mr. Austin and others, appears in most of the other prose works. In that of Mr. Henty⁴ it is, however, secondary to the adventures of Edmund and his friend Egbert who build the 'Dragon'—after Alfred's "drawing of the vessels in use in the Mediterranean"—and have a glorious time winning sea-fights from the Danes, in the style of Mr. Henty's numerous

¹ Most of these are mentioned in Nield's *Guide to the Best Historical Novels and Tales* (New York and London, 1902), p. 26, where they serve to swell the number of works dealing with the ninth century considerably beyond that of neighboring eras. It is to be noticed, however, that only a few make Alfred the principal character.

² Set forth by the author of *Mary Powell*. (London, 1861).

This story deserves to be included in Mr. Nield's List.

³ By Alfred H. Engelbach (London and New York, 1878?).

⁴ *The Dragon or the Raven, or the Days of King Alfred* (New York, 1886?).

heroes of other climes and times. Alfred, "a singularly handsome young prince with an earnest, and intellectual face," does not play a very prominent part.

Far less interesting is the rambling account of Alfred introduced into the book of Gordon-Stables,¹ which apparently attempts to disguise the taste of history for juvenile palates by causing it to be told by modern speakers. Mr. Creswick² makes use of a greater amount of history and adventure. The hero is captured as a child from the Danes by Alfred, who later leaves everything to recover him when lost. Adventures with wolves and a forest fire follow. At the end the hero sets sail under the Black Raven for another volume.

Considerably better is the work of Mr. Whistler,³ although the plot is the usual one. Ranald Vemundsson, a young sea-king, joins Alfred's forces, and fights against the Danes. The sickness of Alfred is well woven into the story. Neot appears, and the Cuthbert legend is also made use of. The Danish princess is now named Thora.

Two volumes which are evident results of the recent "boom in things Alfredian"⁴ are distinguished from the preceding by making Alfred their principal character. Miss Tappan⁵ declares that "however faulty" her work may be, "it is, at least, the result of a thoughtful study of his (Alfred's) character, and an earnest effort to be as accurate as the scantiness of material . . . would permit." Yet Alfred's sister, named Ethelwitha, marries King Buhred. The young prince is accompanied on his journey to Rome by Bishop Swithin; narrowly escapes capture by the Danish fleet, and visits the castle of a robber baron. The flirtation of Judith and Ethelbald is given in considerable detail.

¹ *Twixt Daydawn and Light. A Tale of the Times of Alfred the Great* (New York, —?).

The second portion of the title is unwarranted, since so little of the volume concerns Alfred.

² *In Ælfred's Days. A Story of Saga the Dane* (London and New York, 1899?).

³ *King Alfred's Viking. A Story of the First English Fleet* (London, Edinburgh and New York, 1899).

⁴ "The fact is that there has been, if I may borrow a phrase from the Stock Exchange, a 'boom' in things Alfredian lately; and the literary speculator has rushed in to make his profit." Plummer, *Life and Times of Alfred*, p. 8.

⁵ *In the Days of Alfred the Great* (Boston, 1900).

Much of Mr. Gilliat's¹ story suggests a prose translation of that part of 'England's Darling' which concerns the love episode of Edward and Edgiva. Here and in Miss Madison's² work these lovers reappear, and much is made of the prophetic dream of Egwina (whose name is thus properly corrected from Mr. Austin's form). In spite of the really large amount of history and legend which is introduced, the lack of any attempt to discriminate between authentic and unauthentic authorities, with the frequent unsuitability of language prevents these works from giving any thing like a real picture of Alfred and his times. Perhaps it is illogical to look for this in the class of fiction which is confessedly addressed *virginibus puerisque*, and yet the following list shows that this class forms a considerable portion of the works upon Alfred.

*Works of Fiction upon King Alfred.*³

The Shepherd and the King. Ballad. 1578.

Drury, William, *Alvredus sive Alfredus, Tragi-Comœdia.* [In five acts] (Douay, 1620).

Blackmore, Richard, *Alfred. An Epick Poem.* In *Twelve Books* (London, 1723).

Thomson, James and Mallet, David, *Alfred: A Masque.* [In two acts] (London, 1740).

Mallet, David, *Alfred. A Masque.* [In three acts] (London, 1751).

Alfred the Great; Deliverer of His Country A Tragedy. [In five acts] (London, 1753).

Home, John, *Alfred: A Tragedy.* [In five acts] (London, 1778).

D'Arnaud, Baculard, "Alfred le Grand." In *Délassements de l'Homme Sensible* (Paris, 1783).

Bicknell, Alexander, *The Patriot King, or Alfred and Elvida. An Historical Tragedy.* [In four acts] (London, 1788).

Alfred: An Historical Tragedy. [In five acts] (Sheffield, 1789).

¹ *God Save King Alfred* (London and New York, 1901).

After the birth of Athelstane Edward writes to Alfred: "To my dear father greeting and love. This letter maketh thee happily to know that we have this day a little son—mother says 'a beautiful boy'—and I must not gainsay her." John the Old Saxon is definitely identified with John Erigena. Asser declares that he will put "in a short life which he has in his mind to write," the story of Denewulf, who has become Bishop of Winchester.

² *A Maid at King Alfred's Court. A Story for Girls* (Philadelphia, 1902).

³ This list does not include a few short poems, which are observed in the next section, under General Mention. There also are named a number of German works of fiction dealing with Alfred.

Penn, John, *The Battle of Eddington, or British Liberty. A Tragedy.* [In five acts] (London, 1792).

[Subsequent editions in 1796 and 1832].

O'Keefe, John, *Alfred, or The Magic Banner.* In three acts (London, 1796).

Lonsdale, M., *Sketch of Alfred the Great, or The Danish Invasion. A Grand Historical Ballet.* Performed at Sadler's Wells, London, 1798.

Pye, Henry James, *Alfred; An Epic Poem in Six Books* (London, 1801).

Cottle, Joseph, *Alfred; An Epic Poem in Twenty-four Books* (London, 1801).

[Subsequent editions in 1804, 1814, 1816, and 1850].

Science Revived, or The Vision of Alfred. A Poem in Eight Books (London, 1802).

Pocock, Isaac, *Alfred the Great, or The Enchanted Standard. A Musical Drama in Two Acts* (London, 1827).

Alfred the Great, A Drama in Five Acts (London, 1829).

Knowles, James Sheridan, *Alfred the Great; or The Patriot King. An Historical Play.* [In five acts] (London, 1831).

Egerton, Francis, Earl of Ellesmere, *Alfred. A Drama. In One Act* (London, 1840).

Fitchett, John, *King Alfred. A Poem.* [In forty-eight books] (London, 1841).

Harlequin Alfred the Great! or, The Magic Banjo and The Mystic Raven! A . . . Christmas Pantomime (London, 1850).

Kelsey, Richard, *Alfred of Wessex.* [In twenty-four books] (Bath, Sussex, 1852).

Brough, Robert B., *King Alfred and the Cakes.* In *A Cracker Bon-bon* (London, 1852).

Brough, Robert B., *Alfred the Great, or The Minstrel King. An Historical Extravaganza* (London, 1859).

Manning, Anne, *The Chronicle of Ethelsted* (London, 1861).

De Redcliffe, Stratford, *Alfred the Great in Athelney. An Historical Play* (London, 1876).

Engelbach, A. H., *The Danes in England. A Tale of the Days of King Alfred* (London and New York, 1878 ?).

Henty, G. A., *The Dragon and the Raven, or The Days of King Alfred* (New York, 1886).

Pitchford, John Watkins, *Ælfred* (London, — ?).

Austin, Alfred, *England's Darling.* [In five acts] (London and New York, 1896).

Gordon-Stables, *Twixt Daydawn and Light* (New York, Dutton & Co., — ?).

Creswick, Paul, *In Ælfred's Days* (London and New York, 1899 ?).

Whistler, Charles W., *King Alfred's Viking* (London, Edinburgh and New York, 1899).

Tappan, Eva March, *In the Days of Alfred the Great* (Boston, 1900).

Gilliat, E., *God Save King Alfred* (London and New York, 1901).

Madison, Lucy Foster, *A Maid at King Alfred's Court* (Philadelphia, 1902).

Fenn, G. Manville, *The King's Sons* (E. Nister, — ?).

Creswick, Paul, *Under the Black Raven* (E. Nister, — ?).

Pollard, Eliza F., *A Hero King* (Partridge & Co., — ?).

Bevan, Tom, *A Lion of Wessex* (Partridge & Co., — ?).

For the mention of the last four works, which I have not had opportunity to examine, I am indebted to the list of Mr. Nield. Of that by Fenn he notes: "A very slight but charming story of Alfred's boyhood, specially suited for the very young."

GENERAL MENTION.

It is interesting to speculate how different a literary fate would have been that of the figure of Alfred had it become the subject of an epic by Milton, or even of a biography by Dr. Johnson. Yet among the former's subjects for British Tragedy is the following: "Alfred in disguise of a minstrel discovers the Danes' negligence, sets on with a mighty slaughter; about the same time the Devonshire men rout Hubba and slay him.

"A heroical poem may be founded somewhere in Alfred's reign, especially at his issuing out of Edelingsey on the Danes, whose actions are well like those of Ulysses."¹

The Life by Johnson was perhaps nearer to becoming a reality, for Boswell writes: "Dr. Adams informs me that 'at this time (the year 1746) a favourite object which he had in contemplation was 'The Life of Alfred'; in which, from the warmth with which he spoke about it, he would, I believe, had he been master of his own will, have engaged himself, rather than on any other subject.'"²

But having failed to obtain either of these two possibilities it must be admitted, in the words of Mr. Austin, that, "extolled by a succession of prose historians . . . Alfred is forgotten by Chaucer, all but ignored by Spenser, unnamed by Shakespeare,

¹ *The Works of Milton, Historical, Miscellaneous and Political* (London, 1753), vol. I, p. LII; Masson, *Life of Milton* (London and New York, 1871), vol. II, p. 114.

That Milton also contemplated Arthur as a poetical subject is well known. (cf. *ibid.*, p. 95).

Milton's tribute in his *History of England* (Book V) should not be forgotten, where he speaks of Alfred's "noble mind, which rendered him the mirror of Princes." This epithet is repeated in Wordsworth's Sonnet upon Alfred.

² *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill (Oxford, 1887), vol. I, p. 177. Johnson was then thirty-seven. Little is known of his literary activity at this period. A year later appeared the *Plan* for his Dictionary.

and but fortuitously alluded to by the most eminent of their successors.”¹

Attention has been in recent times particularly directed to the neglect of Tennyson who, like Shelley, apparently names Alfred in but a single line.² That to the Laureate, as to Milton, the figure of Arthur should have proved more attractive must be regarded as evidence in the question of Alfred’s worth for poetic use, since his is of the two the more familiar figure.³ The unique distinction of having sung *both* kings belongs to Blackmore.

Among earlier poets Thomson’s lines have been already alluded to when considering his *Masque*. In addressing Britannia he says :

“Thy sons of glory many! Alfred thine,
In whom the splendour of heroic war
And more heroic peace, when governed well,
Combine; whose hallowed name the virtues saint
And his own muses love—the best of kings.”⁴

It might have been supposed that Gray would find in Alfred a congenial subject, but the nearest approach to such a poem is a very obvious imitation of that author’s *Ode, ‘The Bard,’* by Robert Holmes,⁵ a biblical scholar of Oxford. This tells how,

¹ The Preface to *England’s Darling*.

² “Truth-teller was our England’s Alfred named.”
Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.

Shelley writes in the *Ode to Liberty* :

“A thousand years the Earth cried ‘Where art thou?’
And then the shadow of thy coming fell
On Saxon Alfred’s olive-cinctured prow.”

³ Mr. Austin (*ut supra*) considers Alfred a more desirable poetic hero than Arthur. “Who will warrant the existence of Arthur more than of Brute or of Merlin? The *Flos Regum* of Bardic story has not flesh-and-blood enough to enforce full homage from our imagination. Moreover, Arthur is a Celtic, not a Saxon Prince; and the tactful genius of an exquisite poet has abstained from endowing him with more than a limited number of somewhat negative virtues.”

⁴ The lines occur in “Summer” of the *Seasons*. *Poetical Works*, ed. Bell (London, 1861), vol. II, p. 110.

⁵ *Alfred. An Ode. With six Sonnets*. By Robert Holmes, M. A. Fellow of New College, Oxford, 1778. 4°

There are several notes. The first says: “King Alfred after having defeated

“Great Alfred’s tongue
 Preluded to prophetic song,
 Upon a rock from whose proud height
 The White-Horse looks o’er Ossa’s frontier-plain.”

Other lines which recall those of Gray continue :

“His soiled vest, unseemly riven
 Flowed to the driving winds of heaven.”

Alfred’s prophetic powers are chiefly directed to the future Oxford where,

“The Muse shall breathe her strains of lofty theme.”

Passing to later times Leigh Hunt expresses an enthusiastic admiration for Alfred in his spirited ‘Feast of the Poets,’¹ when he tries to find a comparison for the appearance of Apollo :

“No,—nobody’s likeness will help me I see,
 To afford you a notion of what he could be,
 Not though I collected one pattern victorious
 Of all that was good and accomplished, and glorious,
 From deeds in the daylight, or books on the shelf,
 And call’d up the shape of young Alfred himself.”

In a note to these lines Hunt eulogizes Alfred, and declares it “a disgrace to English biography, that there is no life of our unrivalled countryman, important enough from the size and composition to do him justice.” Hunt describes what the proper Life should be—“a compact, lively volume, written by one who was learned enough to enter into the language of his hero”—in such a way as to suggest that he may have himself contemplated such a work.

Alfred’s German biographer Stolberg—the one-time companion the Danes at Eddington is placed in the following piece on the White-Horse Hills Berkshire. . . . From this situation, which was not very remote from the scene of his late victory, his eye might command a distant view of that vale, in which Oxford now stands.”

¹ 2nd edition, (London, 1815), p. 3.

of Goethe's youth—introduces his *Life*¹ with an Ode, something in the manner that Hunt might have adopted had he composed the "compact, lively volume." These stanzas, which are typical productions of the Göttingen "Hainbund," declare high praise of Alfred, and end with his supposed words:

" Liebe, meine Mutter, bist du !
 Albions Freude, sei du meine Braut
 Albions Freiheit meine Tochter du !"

Since Alfred has been seen to figure in a spectacular ballet, and a musical comedy, to say nothing of the Christmas pantomimes,² it is not surprising to find him in grand opera as well. Among the early and little-known works of Donizetti was *Alfredo il Grande*.³ This I have not examined, but it may be assumed that the plot is not dissimilar to the 'Alfred der Grosse'⁴ of Theodor Körner, in which Alfred sings and conquers in true operatic style.

¹ *Leben Alfreds des Grossen* (Münster, 1815).

² In connection with this comic aspect of Alfred may be mentioned *The Golden Butterfly* by Besant and Rice, in which the poet, Cornelius Jagenal, is at work upon his great and never finished epic, *The Upheaving of Ælfred*. (One wonders if the authors ever heard of John Fitchett and his forty-years' labor.) Nor should George Rumbold's painting of *Alfred in the Neatherd's Cottage* be forgotten (Thackeray's *Our Street*): "An idea of the gigantic size and Michel-Angelesque proportions of this picture may be formed, when I state that the mere muffin, of which the outcast king is spoiling the baking, is two feet three in diameter." It will be recalled that Mr. Gandish (*The Newcomes*, vol. I, chap. xvii) claimed to have originated this popular subject of early Victorian art.

³ This was produced in 1823; at Naples (according to the *Dictionnaire Universelle*), or at Venice (according to Riemann's *Opern-Handbuch*, Leipzig, 1887).

⁴ (*Heroische*) *Oper in Zwei Aufzügen*. Musik von J. P. Schmidt. Im königl. Opernhause zu Berlin aufgeführt den 28. November, 1830. *Deutsche National-Literatur*, vol. 153, p. 335 ff.

Personen.

Alfred der Grosse, König von England.

Alwina, seine Braut.

Rowena, ihre Freundin.

Dorset, englischer Ritter.

Seward, Alfred's Knappe.

Harald }
 Gothron } dänische Fürsten und Feldherren.

Chor der Engländer.

Chor der Dänen.

Chor der Gefangenen.

Chor der danischen Frauen.

Still another opera is recorded with a number of German works, in the study of Liebau upon Edward III in literature.¹ These works are all by obscure authors, and I have been unable to obtain any of them for investigation. Their number, however, testifies further to the importance of Alfred's figure in popular estimation.

A French poem, in which the usual incidents are employed with the addition of some Scandinavian mythology, is the 'Alfred'² of

There are five acts. Alfred plays the part of the minstrel, and Alwina is captured by the cruel Harald. The latter quarrels with Gothron, and when conquered by Alfred, stabs himself. The subject was mentioned to Schiller by his friend, Christian Gottfried Körner, in 1801. The latter's son, Theodor Körner, abridged the original considerably. (See "Einleitung" in *Deut. Natl.-Litt.*)

¹ Gustav Liebau, *König Eduard III von England im Lichte europäischer Poesie*, *Anglistische Forschungen* (Heidelberg, 1901), Anhang, pp. 79 and 80. In addition to such German works as I have mentioned in the text the following are named:

Reiff, J. J., *Alfred der Grosse*, oper, aufgeführt in Coblenz (ungedruckt).

Cowmeadow, Joh. Wilh., *Alfred König der Angelsachsen, oder: Der patriotische König*. Ein trauerspiel in 5 akten, frei nach dem englischen bearbeitet (Berlin, 1795; nachdruck Grätz, 1796).

Salice-Contessa, Christian Jakob, *Alfred*, historisches schauspiel in 5 a. (Hirschberg, 1809).

v. Stolterfoth, Adeheid, *Alfred*, romantisch-episches gedicht in 8 gesängen (Wiesbaden, 1834; 2. aufl. Frankfurt, 1840).

Osterwald, Karl Wilh., *König Ælfred*, epische dichtung (Berlin, 1855).

Disselhoff, Julius August Gottfried, (ps. Julius v. Soest), *König Alfred*, epische dichtung (Berlin, 1859).

In the Anhang to Liebau's study is given a list of the German works of fiction upon a great number of English historical characters. The body of the study presents the summaries of a number of works of fiction dealing with Edward III. There are apparently not so many works entirely devoted to him as have appeared based upon Alfred. Among them are, however, two by eminent authors, Sir Walter Scott's *Halidon Hill* and William Blake's *King Edward the Third*.

² *Poème en Quatre Chants; Œuvres de Millevoye* (Paris, 1880), vol. II, p. 259 ff.

Alfred, disguised as the shepherd Edvin, wins the love of Edvitha, the daughter of Olgard. Much is made of the minstrel visit, where Alfred and the Scalds sing in rivalry. Ivar kills himself rather than receive his life at the hands of Alfred. At the conclusion it is stated that,

" Alfred assis au trône d'Angleterre
Songeait souvent à l'île solitaire."

He visits it with Edvitha for six days in each year, and erects there *la Chapelle du Père*. There are numerous notes.

Charles Hubert Millevoye, which appeared in 1814, and in the "Avertissement" to which the author wonders that Shakespeare had not composed a tragedy, and Pope an epic upon Alfred.

Before leaving the writers of Germany and France two prose tributes of characteristic authors may be quoted, which are mentioned among those collected by Mr. Austin. Voltaire in his 'Essai sur les Moeurs et L'Esprit des Nations'¹ declares "Je ne sais s'il y a jamais un homme plus digne des respects de la postérité qu' Alfred le Grand, qui rendit ces services à la patrie, supposé que tout ce qu' on raconte de lui soit véritable." While Herder writes of Alfred: "Hundert Jahre nach Karl dem Grossen war er in einem glücklicherweise beschränkteren Kreise vielleicht grösser als er."²

In England, too, as has been noticed it is the great authors of prose, rather than those of verse, who have oftenest paid their tributes. Of particular importance are those which are spoken with the authority of historians, and which appear in the works of Hume,³ Turner,⁴ Freeman⁵ and Green.⁶

Allusion should be made to the reference of Wilson in the 'Noctes Ambrosianæ,'⁷ which compares the ambition of Napoleon

¹*Œuvres Complètes*, 1785, vol. 16, p. 473.

In the same account Voltaire contrasts Buhred's flight to Rome with Alfred's courage, and praises the latter for establishing no monasteries!

²*Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit in Sämmtliche Werke* (Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1853) vol. 29, p. 119.

To Herder's interest in Alfred may doubtless be attributed the biography by Stolberg.

³*History of England* (first published in 1776), chap. II.

⁴"For the Life of King Alfred there is no better work than Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*." Gross, *Sources and Literature of English History* (London and New York, 1900). Turner's work first appeared in 1799-1805. Alfred is treated in Book V.

It is, however, noteworthy that for Turner the sinister influence of the Neot Lives still existed. "When we reflect that Alfred had in the beginning of his reign transgressed on this point [the treatment of the poor] he claims our applause for his noble self-correction." (Chap. VI).

⁵*History of the Norman Conquest*, vol. I, p. 54. "I repeat then that Ælfred is the most perfect character in history." The whole passage, like that of Green, is often quoted.

⁶*History of the English People*, vol. I, p. 78.

⁷(Edinburg and London, 1856), vol. III, p. 35.

"We do not . . . think of Alfred as strongly possessed by a Love of Fame

with Alfred's disinterestedness. A similar spirit of hearty enthusiasm animates the well-known 'Scouring of the White Horse'¹ by Thomas Hughes, which gives an interesting description of that curious ceremony which tradition has connected with Alfred's victory at Ashdown.

But to return again to Alfred's treatment by the poets: Longfellow² has told the story of Othere's voyage in acceptable verse,

... The thoughtful moral spirit of Alfred did not make him insensible to the sympathies of men; but it was self-satisfied, and therefore sought them not; and accordingly in our conception of his character, the Love of Glory makes no part, but would, I think, be felt at once to be inconsistent with its simple and sedate grandeur."

¹ *The Scouring of the White Horse; or the Long Vacation Ramble of a London Clerk.* Illustrated by Richard Doyle. (Cambridge, 1859).

There is a second edition with an additional Preface (London and New York, 1889).

Chapter III gives a vivid account of the battle of Ashdown. (See, too, the first chapter of *Tom Brown's School Days*). Among the stanzas in dialect are those beginning:

"The owld White Harse wants zettin to rights,"

which tell how

"A was made a lang, lang time ago,
Wi a good dale o' labour and pains,
By King Alfred the Great, when he spiled their consate,
And caddled thay wosbirds the Danes."

Hughes quotes from Francis Wise, the editor of Asser, who wrote in 1738 *A Letter to Dr. Mead concerning some Antiquities in Berkshire, particularly showing that the White Horse is a Monument of the West Saxons*. This work caused some undeserved criticism of the author, who later added *Further Observations upon the White Horse and other Antiquities in Berkshire* (1742).

² *The Discoverer of The North Cape. A Leaf from King Alfred's Orosius.* Longfellow's *Poetical Works* (Boston and New York, 1890), vol. III, p. 54.

When Othere tells how six men killed threescore of the seals and narwhales "in two days and no more:"

"Here Alfred the Truth-Teller
Suddenly closed his book,
And lifted his blue eyes,
With doubt and strange surmise
Depicted in their look."

In the author's *Essay on Anglo-Literature* (*Prose Works*, I, 391), first published in 1838, he says, "what a sublime old character was King Alfred! Alfred, the Truth-teller! Thus the ancient historian surnamed him." This epithet, which seems to have impressed both Tennyson and Longfellow, is from the *Pseudo-Asser* (*vide supra* p. 22).

although the whole ballad is of a semi-humorous character. Mr. Austin has, in addition to *England's Darling*, contributed his poem, 'The Spotless King,' which precedes the volume of Essays already mentioned.¹ Perhaps, however, the most deserving compositions in this very restricted field are the four fine Sonnets of Palgrave,² and that of Wordsworth.³ This latter may be fitly quoted in closing this section :

Behold a pupil of the monkish gown,
 The pious Alfred, King to Justice dear !
 Lord of the harp and liberating spear ;
 Mirror of Princes ! Indigent Renown
 Might range the starry ether for a crown
 Equal to *his* deserts, who, like the year,
 Pours forth his bounty, like the day doth cheer,
 And awes like night with mercy-tempered frown.
 Ease from this noble miser of his time
 No moment steals ; pain narrows not his cares.
 Though small his kingdom as a spark or gem,
 Of Alfred boasts remote Jerusalem,
 And Christian India, through her wide-spread clime,
 In sacred converse gifts with Alfred shares.

¹ *Alfred the Great*, ed. Bowker (London, 1899).

² *Visions of England* (London, 1881) p. 29.

³ Number XXVI of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets ; Poetical Works* (Edinburgh, 1885) vol. VII, p. 23.

See also the next Sonnet, *His Descendants*, which begins

“When thy great soul was freed from mortal claims,
 Darling of England !”

CONCLUSION.

Our information concerning Alfred rests almost entirely upon Asser's account, and although its genuineness has been often attacked, the authoritative judges are now inclined to believe it to be in the main authentic. Subsequent writers of mediæval times have made a great number of legendary additions, and some of these have, through the fault of the early editors of Asser, become very intimately associated with the popular conception of Alfred.

Two legendary influences have been particularly marked. From that which begins in the Lives of St. Neot the King's character has suffered an unjust depreciation which has lasted until modern times. From that which credits Alfred with the foundation of Oxford he became a subject of particular interest to the scholars of that university, and there his first elaborate biography was prepared.

In spite of the general recognition of Alfred's greatness, attested by the many eulogies of chroniclers and the deeds ascribed to him by them, in spite of this recognition, which may be said to have continued without a break until the present time,¹ it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that his life was made the subject of a really satisfactory investigation. From the appearance of Pauli's biography dates a decided widening of the popular appreciation of Alfred's real character and the essential facts of his history. The occurrence of the thousandth anniversaries of his birth and death have also served further to arouse

¹ Mr. Plummer (*Life and Times of Alfred*, p. 68), after quoting from the brief and inaccurate accounts of the later chroniclers, writes: "And so through these dim pages the greatest name in English story moves like a shadow cast by some great luminary in eclipse." But it must be considered that this eclipse was never a total one, and that in comparison with other names of early English history Alfred's has during all periods preserved the brightest lustre.

this appreciation in a marked manner;¹ so that the figure of Alfred continues in a unique way to embody the patriotism of England.

On turning to the treatment of so commanding a character in the literature of his country it is impossible not to feel disappointment. Most of the works of fiction seem to justify Freeman's words: "With most people our early history is a mere collection of legends. Alfred is simply the man who forgot to turn the cakes, or, in another form, the king who invented trial by jury."²

The earliest writers generally drew their material from the wholly uncritical Spelman, so that a true reproduction of Alfred's career was impossible. In such a work as Blackmore's epic it was not even attempted, for that author's chief object was to instruct, not to describe his heroes or their adventures.³ The Masque of Thomson and Mallet was scarcely superior as a picture of Alfred, but it possessed the advantage of definitely presenting him as a type of patriotism. In this regard it has been followed by most of the subsequent works. An exception is the drama of Home who attempts to excite the principal interest in Alfred's love story and his adventures while in disguise, but the rôle of lover is naturally generally given, as in Mr. Austin's work, to Edward. It is noticeable that the two dramatic productions, which in addition to the Masque have obtained the greatest success, have been the spectacular performance at Sadler's Wells during the time of a threatened Napoleonic invasion, and the play of Knowles at the accession of William IV. In all these cases Alfred was presented in a time of strong national feeling as an embodiment of English patriotism.

¹ The first lead to the publication of the *Whole Works of Alfred: With Preliminary Essays illustrative of the history, arts and manners of the ninth century* (London, 1858). The second resulted in the erection of the statue at Winchester. For the account of the latter ceremonies see Bowker, *The King Alfred Millenary* (London and New York, 1902).

² *Historical Essays*, 2nd ed. (London, 1872), vol. 1, p. 7.

³ "Blackmore has practically concentrated Le Bossu's idea of an epic" (i. e. that after the plot has been invented well-known names should be given to the characters). Myers, *A Study in Epic Development* (Yale Studies in English, XI, New York, 1901), p. 25.

In regard to the general method of presenting the story it is obvious that both dramas and epics as a rule merely repeat the outlines which were first sketched by Milton.¹ So Mr. Austin, ignorant of the existence of any previous works upon the same subject, merely follows the general treatment of a number of such earlier productions. From this fact it would seem evident that the material is not capable of much variety of treatment. For this reason the drama of de Redcliffe and the poem of Pitchford deserve recognition, since in both of these works Alfred is pictured in the usually neglected aspects of sufferer and penitent.

But, however much the plots of the various works agree, their fidelity to history varies widely. Even when there is an abundant knowledge of the historical material, as in the epics of Pye, Cottle, and Fitchett, these authors show a total lack of ability to reconstruct from this anything like a true historical picture of the times. In this sense of historical atmosphere Mr. Austin's work shows a great gain. To compare 'England's Darling' with the 'Alfred' of Sheridan Knowles is to see at once the great advantage which further historical investigation has given to the later work.

Apart from the incidents of his career, the question remains whether Alfred's own personality is a suitable one for poetic treatment. The words of Mackenzie—the author of 'The Man of Feeling'—have been already quoted² in which he doubts whether an English audience could be pleased to see Alfred "the patriot and law-giver melted down to the weakness of love." Perhaps this would be denied by no one. But Mr. Cothrell³ goes even further in his opinion of Alfred's unsuitability for poetic use. "He is too much of a paragon," says this critic, "too blameless, too unerring, too remote. History has only preserved for us the high lights in Alfred's character; and legend has rejoiced so much in these that in its amplification of history it has added nothing to them beyond a greater degree of emphasis. It has introduced no shadows, nor has it imparted any colour. No immaculate person was ever yet a successful hero of poetry or romance."

¹ Penn, Pye, and Millevoeye make particular reference to Milton's words.

² *Vide supra*, p. 66.

³ *Vide supra*, p. 96.

To this it might be replied that both Asser and subsequent legend do contribute the shadow out of which Alfred successfully emerges after self-mastery ; yet it cannot be denied that there lies much truth in the views expressed. Alfred's historic and patriotic significance is so great as rather to dwarf the purely poetical aspect of his figure, and it would seem to be largely on this account that his treatment in literature has not been more extensive.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON DRURY'S 'ALVREDUS.'

Since making the earlier reference¹ to William Drury's Latin play based upon Alfred,² I have been enabled to examine it through the courtesy of the Librarian of Harvard College Library.³

This work consists of five acts which are divided into a great number of short scenes.⁴ A Prologue and Epilogue are spoken by St. Cuthbert. In the former the Saint declares that he has come from Heaven in order to deliver England and Alfred from the Danes.

The play opens with the defeat of the English, after which Alfred takes refuge in Athelney. Humfredus is captured by the Danes who are about to kill him, when with the aid of Athelredus, who is disguised as a Dane, he makes his escape. In the second act Alfred meets the comic character Strumbo, from whom he obtains

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 52.

² *Alvredus sive Alfredus. Tragicocomoedia.*

³ The title of the volume is: *Dramatica Poemata*, auctore D. Guilielmo Druræo nobili Anglo. Editio ultima ab ipso auctore recognita, et multo quam prima auctior reddita. Antwerp, 1641. 16?

In addition to *Alvredus* it contains *Mors: Comoedia*, and *Reparatus: Tragicocomoedia*.

⁴ *Dramatis Personæ.*

S. Cuthbertus.
Aluredus Rex Angliæ.
Edeluitha Regina.
Osburga Mater Regis.
Edwardus Filius maior Aluredi.
Adeluooldus filius minor Aluredi.
Elfreda filia maior Aluredi.
Elgina filia minor Aluredi.
Humfredus Magister Equitum.
Athelredus Dux Peditum.
Neothus Eremita.
Denewlphus senex subulcus.
Crabila vxor Denewlphi.

Strumbo filius Denewlphi.
Milites. Saltatores.
Gothrunnus Rex Danus.
Osbernus frater Gothrunni.
Gormo cognatus Gothrunni.
Rollo Centurio.
Miles gloriosus.
Pimpo servus militis gloriosi.
Pipero } Pueri Regii.
Titmus }
Nuntii quatuor.
Milites.

food. This he shares with St. Cuthbert, who appears dressed as a beggar. The money which Strumbo receives for the food is made the occasion of a number of comic scenes between him and his mother Crabila, the wife of Denewlph.

The next act describes the adventures of Elfreda, who in her flight meets Miles Gloriosus and Pimpo. Later she is captured by the Danes, whereupon Osburnus and Gormo quarrel over her and the latter is killed. Edward then slays Osburnus and rescues his sister. Neot restores the dead Danes to life and converts them to Christianity.

In Act IV Alfred visits the cell of Neot where he confesses his sins and is promised the recovery of his kingdom. St. Cuthbert appears to the King in a vision and also prophesies victory, the truth of his words being proved by the fish caught by Alfred's attendants. Edelvitha and her daughter are captured by the Danes, but are set at liberty.

In the last act Alfred enters the enemy's camp in disguise. After more scenes of a comic character, and others which tell of Gothron's anger over the supposed death of his brother, the Danish King yields to Alfred and adopts christianity.

This play, which is written in blank verse, shows a curious combination of Alfred's story with many scenes which are obviously copied from the authors of the Latin comedies.¹ Such incongruous elements suggest the later farces of O'Keeffe and Pocock, although the greater use of historic material certainly rests with the earlier writer. An idea of the style may be gathered from the opening soliloquy in which Alfred mourns over the defeat of the English :

“Quo fata vergunt Angliæ? Quisque exitus
Manet Britannos? Insolens hostis fide
Rupta vagatur: Cæde cognata solum
Stagnat suorum, et sanguinis spargit notis
Lacrymosa fontes terra mæstumque imbibit
Ebria cruorem.” etc.

¹The author seems to have coined the names of his comic characters with the exception of the Miles Gloriosus of Plautus. Drury's play is not mentioned by Reinhardstoettner, *Plautus. Spätere Bearbeitungen plautinischer Lustspiele* (Leipzig, 1886), where the use of the figure of Miles Gloriosus in later literature is treated pp. 595-680.

During Alfred's visit to Gothrun's camp it is stated : " Alvredus introductis saltatores, et musicam, sed regis animo nihil inde mitigate discedit."

Drury's religious views are apparent in the large use which is made of the legends connecting Alfred's story with those of St. Neot and St. Cuthbert.



LIFE.

I was born in Baltimore in 1873. After attending private schools of this city I entered the Johns Hopkins University in 1890, and was graduated in the class of 1894. For three years I studied medicine at the University of Maryland and received in 1897 the degree of Doctor of Medicine from that institution. In the following autumn I began the study of English as a principal subject, and of German and French as subordinate subjects at the Johns Hopkins University. In 1899 I was appointed University Scholar for the department of English, and in 1901 Fellow in English. I here take occasion to express my thanks to Dr. Bright both for the suggestion of the subject of this dissertation and for the help he has given me in its preparation.

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