

The Blameless King of British History

What Good King Alfred Did for His Country.

As many boys in Canada know, the year 1901 is the thousandeth year since King Alfred the Great's death. The anniversary will be observed in November next in England with jubilee addresses and memorials. Alfred was certainly a good king, and Sir Walter Besant terms him "The one blameless king in our history, the great heroic figure of our Saxon forefathers, the very type of our race at its best and noblest." From an excellent article in the Outlook, describing his character and work, we abridge the following:—

You have read in books the broad facts of his life; the nine years' struggle; the nine years' battle;

the overthrow and ruin that seemed complete; the sudden upspringing, as of the strong man restored by contact with the earth, and the rout of the invader. It is a wonderful story. Alfred raised an army, filled it with new confidence, and led it to victory. Remember that the Saxon kings not only led their armies, but fought in the very forefront. In those days no king could keep throne and crown who was not, first and above all, a soldier.

It has been pointed out by Sir Frederick Pollock that Alfred laid the foundation of our military system, and in place of tribal levies, which could be kept together only for a short time, made distinct

provision for a field army, garrisons and reserves. As regards the navy, he created it. He gave the nation its fleet; he taught them the great lesson that the safety of an island must be found in a fleet. The fleets which bear the flags of our race are the heritage of King Alfred.

He made of London an impregnable fortress. When we think of the part that London has played in the national history; when we consider that every municipality all over the English-speaking world, with its mayor, aldermen, common councillors, and officers, is the direct descendant of the municipality of London, we may acknowledge that this part of Alfred's heritage was valuable indeed.

It is strange that Alfred's educational dream should have had to wait in England for nearly a thousand years. It is only thirty years since the English brain was able to persuade itself that safety, not to speak of justice and equal rights, lies in the education of the whole people. This



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT FROM THE THAMES, LONDON, ENGLAND.

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