

## OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

## CAN YOU?

CAN you make a rose or a lily,—just one?  
Or catch a beam of the golden sun?  
Can you count the rain-drops as they fall?  
Or the leaves that flutter from tree-tops tall?  
Can you run like the brook and never tire?  
Can you climb like the vine beyond the spire?  
Can you fly like a bird, or weave a nest,  
Or make but one feather on tobin's breast?

Can you build a cell like the bee, or spin  
Like the spider, a web so fine and thin?  
Can you lift a shadow from off the ground?  
Can you see the wind, or measure a sound?  
Can you blow a bubble that will not burst?  
Can you talk with echo and not speak first?

Oh, my dear little boy! you are clever and strong,  
And you are so busy the whole day long,  
Trying as hard as a little boy can  
To do big things like a "grown-up" man!  
Look at me, darling! I tell you true,  
There are some things you never can do.

—Mary E. Felton, *St. Nicholas* for December.

## KING ALFRED'S LANTERN.

DID you ever try to imagine, when you were studying the beginnings of English history, what kind of people those old Anglo-Saxons were, and how they lived? They were our far-off ancestors, and our language for the most part was made from theirs, in fact, we are called Anglo-Saxons ourselves; so we ought to be interested in them.

They were a rude people in many respects, and lived in a rude way, compared with ours. How would you like windows which had no glass in them,—very small windows, too,—but had oiled paper or sheets of horn instead? Of course the rooms must have been dark and dismal, you will say. And what would you think of houses without chimneys, or anything we should call chimneys? But matters were really not much better, even in king's houses, about ten hundred years ago.

The most important room in those days was called the hall; and it was large enough to accommodate the family, the great company of servants, and all the guests who chose to come. They ate there, sat there, and most of them slept there, on rough benches, or rolled up in skins on the floor. It was open to every chance traveller, to the wandering harpers, to beggars, and everybody else.

The fire was built against a clay or stone arrangement, answering for a fire-place, at one end, or on an immense stone hearth in the middle; and the smoke, after floating up overhead, found its way out through an opening or a kind of turret in the roof. At dark they heaped high the logs and fagots; and happy was he who on a stormy night could get near the blaze. When supper-time came, servants stood behind those at table and held torches over their heads till the meal was over; and when bed-time came, the guests who had any other place than the hall to sleep in were lighted to it in the same way.

As for the king, he was more privileged than that; though just what they first used for lights, and just when lamps became common among the Anglo-Saxons, it is not easy to find out. We see in some very old pictures a simple little lamp, shaped perhaps like a saucer, hung by chains at the side of the room, and holding, no doubt, a piece of wax or some kind of oil, with a strip of cloth in it for a wick. Sometimes, in the royal chambers, for a very long time after King Alfred's day, a light was kept by means of a cake of wax in a silver basin.

They knew how to make candles, however; but instead of putting one *in* a candlestick, it was put *on* it. The candlestick had a point at the top, called a spike, and the candle was made hollow at the bottom, and slipped down over the spike; one so fixed was known as a "pricket."

There is, among some illustrations of old customs, a picture of a candlestick, which is very queer though very elegant, and looks like a little piece of furniture. It is a tall stem rising from a three-footed, three-cornered stand, very much ornamented; it comes to a point at the top, and a little way below is a plate to hold the tallow or wax that might run down. We do not know that King Alfred had anything like this; but he had what nobody had ever seen before in that country, for he invented it himself, and that was a *lantern*.

This good king was a very busy man; the people around him might be willing to idle away their days over the fire, listening to the harpers, telling stories, and playing with the hounds, but he felt he had a great work to do. He wanted to make his subjects more civilized, to teach them useful arts, and he had not an hour to waste. He built towns, he built ships; he read, and studied, and wrote,—and that was wonderful, indeed, in those days when there were but few books, and when even princes could not write their own names. He was the best, the wisest, and the most learned king that the Saxons had ever had.

He used to carry in his bosom "memorandum leaves, in which he made collections from his studies," and this journal he was in the habit of examining so much that "he called it his *hand-book*." And, perhaps, this is where the word "hand-book" came from. Of course, he read far into the night, but he soon found two troubles,—there was no way to mark the time, for there were no clocks nor watches then, and he could not keep a steady light, because the houses were so open that the wind came in from every quarter. He had noon-marks, but those amounted to nothing on rainy days; and everybody knows what a country England is for rain.

However, when such a man as Alfred makes up his mind to do a thing, he is almost sure to find a way. So he had a quantity of wax prepared, took enough of it to weigh down seventy-two silver pennies, and of it had six candles made, all weighing the same, and each twelve inches long, and marked off into twelve divisions. He planned so nicely that these six would burn twenty-four hours; and he always kept one lighted day and night before some holy relics and images of saints which he had, and which, being a very pious man, he carried about with his luggage wherever he went.

He would now have had not only tolerable light, but a very good way of marking the hours, if the candles had always been sure of burning a given time. But if the wind blew, the flame would flare, and perhaps go out; and the king made up his mind that there could be something done to remedy this,—and he did it. He made a frame-work, and fixed into it little plates or windows of horn, scraped so thin that the light could shine through, set his candle inside, and shut it in,—and the thing was done. He had a lantern, sure in all weathers. A very small affair it

may seem to *you*, but it was a great one to *him*.

I once saw a picture of a rude Saxon lantern somewhat like his, perhaps, though it was probably an improvement on it; for no sooner does one man invent a thing, than another finds a way to make it better. This, in shape, made me think of a bird-cage without the tray or railing. It had a kind of cupola-like top, and was much ornamented; there were bands with bosses on them, looking like metal, around the bottom, the middle, and next to the roof; and there was a pretty arched door. Altogether, it was a very curious, but a rather clumsy and rather dark lantern.—*St. Nicholas* for December.

## POWER OF A SWEET VOICE.

THERE is no power of love so hard to get and keep as a kind voice. A kind hand is deaf and dumb. It may be rough in flesh and blood, yet do the work of a soft heart, and do it with a soft touch. But there is no one thing that love so much needs as a sweet voice to tell what it means and feels; and it is hard to get and keep it in the right tone. One must start in youth, and be on the watch night and day, at work and play, to get and keep a voice that shall speak at all times the thoughts of a kind heart.

But this is the time when a sharp voice is most apt to be got. You often hear boys and girls say words at play with a quick, sharp tone, as if it were the snap of a whip. When one of them gets vexed, you will hear a voice that sounds as if it were made up of a snarl, a whine and a bark. Such a voice often speaks worse than the heart feels. It shows more ill-will in the tone than in the words. It is often in mirth that one gets a voice or a tone that is sharp, and sticks to him through life, and stirs up ill-will and grief, and falls like a drop of gall on the sweet joys at home. Such as these get a sharp home voice for use, and keep their best voice for those they meet elsewhere, just as they would save their best cakes and pies for guests, and all their sour food for their own board. I would say to all boys and girls, "Use your guest voice at home." Watch it day by day as a pearl of great price, for it will be worth more to you in days to come than the best pearl hid in the sea. A kind voice is a lark's song to a hearth and home. It is to the hearth what light is to the eye. It is a light that sings as well as shines. Train it to sweet tones now, and it will keep in tune through life.—*Youth's Comrade*.

A WRITER tells us that Scottish mothers used, when their children disagreed and were unhappy, to say to them, "Ye'll a' agree better when ye ha' to gang in at the different kirk doors;" that is, when this hearthstone is cold, and the lamp of a mother's love is quenched, when you are scattered far and wide, you'll forget little differences, and look back lovingly to those days when you might have been so happy, and wish them back again. No love then will be like the love of sisters and brothers, which you now esteem so lightly. Let those of us who are sheltered in happy homes cherish our blessings, for the days must come when we shall be scattered, and "go in at different kirk doors" never again to be a united band.