

sired to devote themselves to the service of the Church might be taught Latin." No doubt the wish was most imperfectly fulfilled, but still it was a noble wish. We are told the king himself was often present at the instruction of the children in the palace school. A pleasant calm after the storms of battle with the Dane!

Oxford (Ousen-ford, the ford of the Ouse) was already a royal city; and it may be conjectured that, amidst the general restoration of learning under Alfred, a school of some sort would be opened there. This is the only particle of historical foundation for the academic legend. Oxford was desolated by the Norman Conquest, and anything that remained of the educational institution of Alfred was in all probability swept away.

Another measure, indispensable to the civilizer as well as to the church reformer in those days, was to restore the intercourse with Rome, and through her with continental Christendom, which had been interrupted by the troubles. The Pope, upon Alfred's accession, had sent him gifts and a piece of the Holy Cross. Alfred sent embassies to the Pope, and made a voluntary annual offering, to obtain favourable treatment for his subjects at Rome. But, adopted child of Rome, and naturally attached to her as the centre of ecclesiastical order and its civilizing influences though he was, and much as he was surrounded by ecclesiastical friends and ministers, we trace in him no ultramontanism, no servile submission to priests. The English Church, as far as we can see, remains national, and the English king remains its head.

Not only with Latin, but with Eastern Christendom, Alfred, if we may trust the contemporary Saxon chronicles, opened communication. As Charlemagne, in the spirit partly perhaps of piety, partly of ambition,

had sent an embassy with proofs of his grandeur to the Caliph of Bagdad; as Louis XIV., in the spirit of mere ambition, delighted to receive an embassy from Siam; so Alfred, in a spirit of piety unmixed, sent ambassadors to the traditional Church of St. Thomas in India: and the ambassadors returned, we are told, with perfumes and precious stones as the memorials of their journey, which were long preserved in the churches. "This was the first intercourse," remarks Pauli, "that took place between England and Hindostan."

All nations are inclined to ascribe their primitive institutions to some national founder, a Lycurgus, a Theseus, a Romulus. It is not necessary now to prove that Alfred did not found trial by jury, or the frank-pledge, or that he was not the first who divided the kingdoms into shires, hundreds, or tithings. The part of trial by jury which has been politically of so much importance, its popular character, as opposed to arbitrary trial by a royal or imperial officer—that of which the preservation, amidst the general prevalence of judicial imperialism, has been the glory of England—was simply Teutonic; so was the frank-pledge, the rude machinery for preserving law and order by mutual responsibility in the days before police; so were the hundreds and the tithings, rudimentary institutions marking the transition from the clan to the local community or canton. The shires probably marked some stage in the consolidation of the Saxon settlements; at all events, they were ancient divisions which Alfred can at most only have reconstituted in a revised form after the anarchy.

He seems, however, to have introduced a real and momentous innovation by appointing special judges to administer a more regular justice than that which was administered in the local courts of the