

# NEW-BRUNSWICK

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"Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men."

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### BIOGRAPHY.

#### ALFRED THE GREAT.

Born at Wantage, in Berkshire, A. D. 849.

Happy BRITANNIA!

Thy sons of glory many! ALFRED thine,  
In whom the splendor of heroic war,  
And more heroic peace, when govern'd well,  
Combine; whose hallow'd name the virtuous saint,  
And his own Muses love; the best of Kings!

THURSON.

If greatness of soul, persevering endeavour, illumined capacity, and a dignified exterior, be considered as qualifications deserving respectful attention, this truly great Prince has priority of claim.

The father of this royal youth being more fit for a Monk than a King, at the age of five years carried him to Rome, where the Pope anointed him with the royal unction. Ethelwolf, his father, dying in 858, the throne successively descended to Ethelbald and Ethelred. To the latter of these Alfred became prime minister, and, being made general too, was placed at the head of his armies.

At the decease of his brother Ethelred, he found himself, at the age of twenty-two, in the possession of a distracted kingdom. By the repeated attacks of the Danes, his people were so dispirited, that he was unable to withstand the invaders; and, laying aside the ensigns of royalty, he concealed himself in one of the cottages belonging to his herdsman. As he one day sat by the fire-side, trimming his bow and arrows, his hostess left in his care some cakes, which were placed on the hearth to bake. Alfred, however, was so absorbed in his employment as to suffer the cakes to be burned. When the woman returned she scolded him heartily, saying, "You can eat the cakes fast enough, though you would not take the trouble of looking after them."

He retired afterward to the Isle of Athelney,\* in Somersetshire, where he built a fort for the security of himself, his family, and the few faithful adherents who resorted to him. When he had been about a year in this retreat, having been informed that some of his subjects had routed a great army of the Danes, killed their chiefs, and taken their magical standard, he issued letters, giving notice of his situation, and inviting his nobles to a consultation. Before their final determination, Alfred, putting on the habit of a hermit, went into the enemy's camp; where, without suspicion, he was every where admitted, and had the honour to play before their Princes. Having thus acquired an exact knowledge of the state of the enemy, he returned in great secrecy to his nobles, and directed them to collect their vassals, each man as great a force as possible, and to meet him at the general rendezvous, in Solwed, Wiltshire. This affair was transacted so secretly and expeditiously, that at the head of an army he approached the Danes before they had the least intelligence of his design. They were of course surprised, and eventually were completely defeated at a place now called Eddington. His gratitude after the acquisition of this victory is well described in the following lines:—

Lofter than the rest

Stood ALFRED. On one side the Queen appear'd,

Bearing her child, and on the other ODDENK;  
While the vast host of Saxons all around  
Intent stood listening. When the king his arm  
Raised, and began:—

"Most gallant men!

One moment more: my words have not been fram'd  
To self applause, nor hath my heart been taught  
To see aught good but from the hands of God.  
When speaking of your valour and your might,  
I know you're but the instruments! On high  
Dwells the great Ruler of all mortal things!  
With him we have found favour. He it was  
Who this deliverance wrought; who by his hand  
Unseen made plain our path, and at this hour  
Gives us to triumph! He it was who screen'd  
Our heads in perils infinite! His arm  
Fought on our side! Saxons, with me rejoice!  
But to the God of Heaven be all the praise!"

COTTE.

Alfred on this occasion behaved also with the greatest liberality, giving up the kingdom of the East Angles to those of the Danes who embraced the Christian Religion.

Having now some respite, he put the nation into a state of defence, and increased his navy. London being likewise recovered from the Danes, he soon raised it into a flourishing city.

After fifty-six battles by land and sea, in all of which he was personally engaged, he struck terror into his enemies, and secured the peace of his dominions.

But although Alfred stands high as a hero of early times, he is most to be admired as a reformer of laws and manners, and the steady promoter of learning. He composed a body of statutes, instituted the trial by jury, and divided the kingdom into shires and tithings. He was so exact in his government, that robbery was unheard of, and valuable property might be left on the High Road, without danger of being meddled with. He also formed a Parliament, which met in London twice a year.

In his time learning was so low in England, that from the Thames to the Humber, as he says himself, hardly a man could be found who understood Latin.\* To remedy this evil, he invited learned men from all parts, and endowed schools throughout his kingdom. If he were not the founder of the University of Oxford, it is certain that he raised it to a reputation which it never enjoyed before. He was himself a learned Prince; and had he not been illustrious as a King, would doubtless have been famous as an Author. He divided the twenty-four hours into three equal parts; one devoted to the service of God, another to public affairs, and the third to refreshment.

To Alfred England is indebted for the foundation of her naval establishment; and he was the first, we are told, who sent out ships to make the discovery of a north-east passage.

The vigour of the Sovereign's genius pervaded every department of the state. He possessed the most inviolable regard to the liberties and constitutional rights of his people; and among other bequests to posterity, his last will contains the following sentiment, which, while it endears his memory to his country, will ever be considered as the best pledge of his being in reality a PATRIOT-KING:—"It is just that the English should for ever

remain as free as their own thoughts." The useful qualifications of this excellent Prince being duly considered, it will readily be believed that he died universally lamented. This calamitous event took place A. D. 900. He was buried in the cathedral at Winchester.

"His character," says Hume, "presents that model of perfection which philosophers have been fond of delimiting, rather as a fiction of their imagination, than in hopes of its real existence: so happily were all his virtues tempered together, so justly were they blended, and so powerfully did each prevent the other from exceeding its proper boundaries."

### ANNIVERSARY.

#### RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

[This society was first established in the year 1799, with a view to promote the circulation of such tracts—either original or compiled from larger compositions—as were best calculated to promote true religion and pure morality, without confining its exertions to any country or climate. As a proof of the extensive operations of the society, it has circulated since its establishment, not fewer than 130 millions of tracts, in forty-eight different languages.]

Western Meeting.—Thursday, May 7.

A Meeting was held to-day, at eleven o'clock, at Willis's Room, King-street, St. James's; the Marquis of Cholmondeley in the chair. In conformity with established usage, a prayer was offered up by the Rev. Mr. Sibthorpe.

The Chairman said, "The motives that have influenced me in giving my support to the Religious Tract Society, are founded upon a conviction that it is calculated to promote the interests of true religion. No means are more effectual for preventing the abuse of that inestimable blessing—education—than the publication of cheap religious treatises—the productions of the most distinguished writers. These tracts, ladies and gentlemen, are not by any means of a controversial character; they maintain the chief and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, as they have been received more or less extensively from the earliest ages of the Church of Christ. In these tracts the fall of man is inculcated; the Deity of Jesus Christ; the atonement by his blood; and the influence of the Holy Spirit. My conviction ever has been, that believing these constitute the doctrines of Christianity; that where they are received generally, there is Christianity; and where they are not to be found, there is Christianity absent also."

The Rev. Mr. Sibthorpe said, the present society had been formed for the purpose, not only of doing good substantively, but of being auxiliary to the benefits which other religious associations were conferring upon the Christian world. Those who heard him would become aware of some small portion of the value and importance of that Society, if they would only reflect for a moment upon the lamentable want of Christian instruction throughout the country at the time when the measures of that institution were brought first into operation. Another circumstance which called for the publication of religious tracts, arose from the effects which the labours of the Bible Society had begun to produce. Years ago there had commenced an excitement which ever since went on increasing. There was a commotion on subjects of that nature throughout the country, which naturally led people to make inquiries on religious subjects, and how important than was it when they inquired the nature of those religious sentiments which were occupying so much attention, that the means of answering their inquiries should be furnished through the medium of familiar expositions of the truths of the Gospel. Another necessity for the labours of the society arose from the immense extent of infidelity. Every hour brought them practical proof that the enemy of souls never slumbered, while proof no less strong came in from every quarter that the friends of

\* While he resided in the Isle, the following circumstance occurred; which, while it convinces us of the extremities to which the great Alfred was reduced, will give a striking proof of his pious and benevolent disposition.—A beggar came to his little castle there, and requested alms; when his Queen informed him that they had only one small loaf remaining, which was insufficient for themselves and their friends, who were gone abroad in quest of food, though with little hope of success. The King replied, "Give the poor Christian the one half of the loaf." He that could feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, can certainly make that half of the loaf suffice for more than our necessities." Accordingly the poor man was relieved; and this noble act of charity was soon recompensed by a providential store of fresh provisions with which his people returned.

\* It is said that Alfred himself was not acquainted with the alphabet till he was a month or 12 years of age; when a book was put into his hand by accident. One day the Queen, his mother, having in her hands a book of Saxon Poems, beautifully written and illuminated, observed that her son's eye was drawn with its beauty, on which, addressing the four royal youths, "I will make a present of this book to him who shall learn to read it so soon." Alfred, who was the youngest, immediately took it, and applied to read with such assiduity, that in a very little time he both read and repeated it. He took it to the Queen, who, according to her promise, presented him with the book for his reward. He composed several works, it is said, and translated others from the Latin, particularly Boetius's Consolations of Philosophy.