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ALFRED'S MOTHER TEACHING HIM SAXON SONGS.

GOOD KING ALFRED.

As many boys in Canada know, the year 1901 is the thousandth 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 are the heritage of King Alfred." 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 doctrine, though we knew it not, was part of Alfred's heritage. "My desire," said the King, "is that all the free-born youths of my people may persevere in learning until they can read perfectly the English Scriptures."

The chief monument of Alfred's reign is, perhaps, his code of law. The great honour and glory of Alfred's lawgiving must be ascribed to the fact that

he was wise enough to amend old laws or to make new, in accordance with the national character. Alfred laid down two principles: first, that justice was the right of every one, rich or poor; and, next, that the laws of men must be in accordance with the laws of God. How far Alfred was a scholar is doubtful; but he was undoubtedly a writer. He collected and preserved the ancient poetry and the old legends. And he speaks of himself with pardonable satisfaction. "This," he says, "I can now truly say, that so long as I have lived I have striven to work worthily; and after my death to leave my memory to my descendants in good works."

The creation of a navy; the government by advice of the wise; trial by our peers; equal justice for rich and poor; the harmony of our law with the law of God; education for all; the foundation of English prose; the encouragement of English scholarship, enterprise, and the arts—is not this a noble heritage? And is there any part of it which is not shared by every soul born to our language and to our laws?—*Canadian Boy*.

Go not in the society of the vicious.



ALFRED THE GREAT IN HIS STUDY.