

rough and noisy schoolboy, fond of fighting, who has not yet learnt to restrain his passions and to love law and order.

There is one character, however, in the early years of English history which stands out like a bright star in the darkness of night. This is Alfred the Great, King of the Saxons.

In an age when men neglected learning, Alfred was eager to gain knowledge and wisdom, and to teach them to his people. When most men were rough and cruel, Alfred was gentle and merciful. When kings were often proud and tyrannous, Alfred was humble and just. When Christian countries had almost forgotten their religion in their struggles against a host of barbarians, Alfred always strove to lead a true Christian life and to teach his countrymen to do the same.

Fortunately we can learn more about his character than in the case of many English kings, for he had a friend and servant, named Asser, who wrote down the story of his master's life. This story is still to be read by anyone who wishes to learn about the wisest of English kings. Everyone can read how Alfred struggled for years against the enemies of England, until by his heroism he saved his country and gave it peace and prosperity. One can read how, in spite of a dreadful disease which gave him no comfort day or night, he devoted his life to the welfare of his people, and how, in spite of his difficulties in obtaining teachers, he became a learned scholar and wrote books for the education of his countrymen, which still interest and instruct scholars of our own day.