



## Young Canada.

Edited by Cousin Maud.

**O**UR Editor gave me a book this week about which she has asked me to chat with my little friends.

It is a book of rhymes of the kings and queens of England, from the time of the Norman Conquest, by Mary Leslie, and I am charmed with it—perhaps the more so because it is the outcome of the happy thought of a Canadian woman. This little work will be a boon to young students of history, as Miss Leslie has succeeded in giving a personality to each ruler, thus making them real people instead of “meaningless names.” She has given a short sketch of each, with the important events of the reign in bright little verses, and at the close of each are directions for reference and further reading. As the author herself modestly says, her work is not, strictly speaking, poetry, but who ever considered “Mother Goose” a poet, yet how these homely old rhymes do cling to our memories. In dressing up dry historical facts in such catchy little jingles, Miss Leslie has done much to make the study attractive and create a desire for wider reading. The book is well illustrated, showing the costumes and principal characters of each period. Surely Miss Leslie knows the way to a child’s heart. Rhymes and pictures! Does not that sound interesting? And not to the little ones only, I saw a boy of no small size so taken with these same rhymes that he almost forgot to eat his supper.

Let me give you the first two verses of the preface:—

“Towers, turrets and churches are rich in old stories,  
Every inch of the land is classical ground,  
Thirty-six sovereigns, their sins and their glories,  
Their sorrows, their triumphs, are here to be found.

“Their goodness, their badness, their loves and their blunders,  
Have passed, and in passing have left a deep mark,  
In structures and pictures and battles and wonders,  
Tales for the daylight and songs for the dark.”

The only king the author talks about before the Conquest is Alfred the Great. Alfred, “Whose candles set the world aglow.”

Alfred, “The scholar, soldier, king  
Who made his rude harp ring  
To liberty and sweet love in days of yore!”

Alfred the Great, indeed, how could he be passed over?

Do we not get a good idea of the harsh, stern rule of William I. from this:

“‘Conqueror’ we call him; he ruled in a passion,  
Planting great forests and burning down towns,  
When the king’s curfew rang out in rude fashion,  
The clergy and people shook under their gowns.

Imagine having to put out lights and fires early each evening, especially in this cold winter of ours!

With very few happy rhymes for any of the

Norman kings we come to this description of Richard “Cœur-de-lion,” the second Plantagenet:

“The wheel of fortune now once more goes round,  
And Richard of the Lion-heart advances,  
Encased in iron, mounted, armed and crowned,  
The princely head of many thousand lances.

“Bound for the Holy Land in proud array  
To wrest our Saviour’s tomb from heathen hand;  
Not any other sovereign of his day  
Appears so martial, splendid, brave and grand.”

Do we not admire him although his mission proved so rash and misguided?

The author has a happy faculty of showing up the good in each period and lightly passing over the evil—except to show where good came out of evil, as in the case of the *Magna Charta*.

Did you children ever pause to think that a great many things we consider necessities have not always been in use? Just think, handkerchiefs and carpets were not known in England until after 1236, and it was not until the reign of Queen Mary that knitted stockings were made.

In speaking of Henry the Third’s wife—a French girl—Miss Leslie tells us:

“She introduced handkerchiefs for the court noses,  
Loved romances and music through all her long day;  
Brought peacocks to England, and carpets, and roses,  
And was brilliant and merry and bonnie and gay.”

The world all sighed over the fate of the two little princes who were smothered in the tower, and most of us have shed tears over the sad death of the “Babes in the Woods,” but I wonder how many of us know that the first was the origin of the latter?

Here it is, listen:

“A satire called ‘The Children in the Wood,’  
Was written when the little princes died,  
Published without a name, with pictures rude,  
Thousands of people since have smiled and sighed

“O’er this sad story. The author is unknown,  
For anger at King Richard caused the rhyme,  
And no man in his day would dare to own  
A tale which holds its own in spite of time.”

We have always looked upon Henry the Eighth as a regular old Blue beard (I wonder was he the origin of that tale?) but somehow he seems to have been a favorite for all his cruelty. Here is what the rhyme says:

“‘Bluff Hal,’ as they called him, although greatly feared,  
Was not hated in his day, as we might suppose,  
Whenever he went abroad he was cheered,  
From the very beginning of his reign to its close.

“We may study King Henry again and again,  
And feel much disgust and distaste and more wonder,  
There are crimes upon crimes in his wicked reign,  
But scarcely through all a political blunder.”

It is clearly seen a king can be neither “Grit” nor “Tory,” just think, not one “political blunder.”

Queen Elizabeth, who we never feel sure whether we like or dislike, she was such a contradiction, is well described in the following two stanzas:

“She was not a nice woman and given to swearing,  
She broke with the Spaniard and bullied the Pope,  
But she was ambitious, courageous and daring,  
And asserted herself as the Protestant hope.

“She was loved by her people, and strong in the hand,  
And gorgeous in dress, and a woman of learning;  
Nobly fitted by nature to rule and command,  
Rough and ready in speech, but clear-headed, discerning.”

Full justice is done the important reign of Queen Bess. You remember during this time several great men lived and worked, and are living still in their works. And so on through all the kings and queens, some good, some bad, some indifferent, but we realize afresh, as we come to the closing pages, that best of all, noblest and purest, doing the best for her God, and the best for her people, is our own dear Queen Victoria.

“Our Queen! I’m sure a person foreign born,  
Can hardly understand our heart’s whole might,  
When we sing “God Save the Queen” in early morn  
Or in the still and solemn hour of night.”

Let us each take a lesson from this:

“And she keeps all her appointments to the minute,  
She never let her lowest subject wait  
When she said she would see him. There’s a great deal in it;  
It is not a common virtue let me state.

“Her life is by far the noblest story  
Of royal womanhood we have ever seen,  
In her ‘the hoary head is a crown of glory,’  
Above the royal crown. “God Save the Queen.”

My very little friends, who are not yet old enough to read history, will think I have entirely forgotten them, but not so. Here is a wee story for you:

Deep down in the earth, under our great city, live wicked fairies.

Their home is like a great cave with long passages running north and south, east and west, and across one another.

“And do these creatures stay in their underground home?

By no means, they continually come up to earth through doors which men have opened for them, right in our streets, and they come up in swarms. These little imps are so small, that you or I might meet thousands of them and never see one.

Yet others have seen them, but through magic glasses.

Well, one day some of these wicked little fairies made up their minds to leave their dark home and come up into the sunlight and see what mischief they could do; so, coming to one of the openings in a nice street, up they flew.

At that very time a dear little boy called Willie, who was playing in the street, spied the opening and got down on his hands and knees to peep in, so the little imps sailed right into his throat.

Now, these wicked little fairies have the power of multiplying, that is, each one can turn himself into a hundred more.

That night Willie was taken very ill and in a day or two died—killed by the wicked fairies.

Now, children, this is a true story, these fairies really exist and they actually kill people.

Who will be clever to tell me their true names, who it is has seen them oftenest, and the name of the magic glasses.

COUSIN MAUD.