

# JOHN LORD

BEACON LIGHTS OF  
HISTORY, VOLUME 08:  
GREAT RULERS

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**Beacon Lights of History,**  
**Volume 08: Great Rulers**

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# **John Lord**

## **Beacon Lights of History,**

### **Volume 08: Great Rulers**

#### **ALFRED THE GREAT**

**A.D. 849-901**

#### **THE SAXONS IN ENGLAND**

Alfred is one of the most interesting characters in all history for those blended virtues and talents which remind us of a David, a Marcus Aurelius, or a Saint Louis,—a man whom everybody loved, whose deeds were a boon, whose graces were a radiance, and whose words were a benediction; alike a saint, a poet, a warrior, and a statesman. He ruled a little kingdom, but left a great name, second only to Charlemagne, among the civilizers of his people and nation in the Middle Ages. As a man of military genius he yields to many of the kings of England, to say nothing of the heroes of ancient and modern times.

When he was born, A.D. 849, the Saxons had occupied Britain, or England, about four hundred years, having conquered it from the old Celtic inhabitants soon after the Romans had retired to defend their own imperial capital from the Goths. Like the Goths, Vandals, Franks, Burgundians, Lombards, and Heruli, the Saxons belonged to the same Teutonic race, whose remotest origin can be traced to Central Asia,—kindred, indeed, to the early inhabitants of Italy and Greece, whom we call Indo-European, or Aryan. These Saxons—one of the fiercest tribes of the Teutonic barbarians;—lived, before the invasion of Britain, in that part of Europe which we now call Schleswig, in the heart of the peninsula which parts the Baltic from the northern seas; also in those parts of Germany which now belong to Hanover and Oldenburg. It does not appear from the best authorities that these tribes—called Engle, Saxon, and Jute—wandered about seeking a precarious living, but they were settled in villages, in the government of which we trace the germs of the subsequent social and political institutions of England. The social centre was the homestead of the *oetheling* or *corl*, distinguished from his fellow-villagers by his greater wealth and nobler blood, and held by them in hereditary reverence. From him and his brother-oethelings the leaders of a warlike expedition were chosen. He alone was armed with spear and sword, and his long hair floated in the wind. He was bound to protect his kinsmen from wrong and injustice. The land which inclosed the village, whether reserved for pasture, wood, or tillage, was undivided, and every free villager had the

right of turning his cattle and swine upon it, and also of sharing in the division of the harvest. The basis of the life was agricultural. Our Saxon ancestors in Germany did not subsist exclusively by hunting or fishing, although these pursuits were not neglected. They were as skilful with the plough and mattock as they were in steering a boat or hunting a deer or pursuing a whale. They were coarse in their pleasures, but religious in their turn of mind; Pagans, indeed, but worshipping the powers of Nature with poetic ardor. They were born warriors, and their passion for the sea led to adventurous enterprise. Before the close of the third century their boats, driven by fifty oars, had been seen in the British waters; and after the Romans had left the Britons to defend themselves against the Scots and Picts, the harassed rulers of the land invoked the aid of these Saxon pirates, and, headed by two ealdormen,—Hengist and Horsa,—they landed on the Isle of Thanet in the year 449.

These two chieftains are the earliest traditionary heroes of the Saxons in England. Their mercenary work was soon done, and after it was done they had no idea of retiring to their own villages in Germany. They cast their greedy eyes on richer pastures and more fruitful fields. Brother-pirates flocked from the Elbe and Rhine to their settlement in Thanet. In forty-five years after Hengist and Horsa landed, Cerdic with a more formidable band had taken possession of a large part of the southern coast, and pushed his way to Winchester and founded the kingdom of Wessex. But the work of conquest was slow. It took seventy years

for the Saxons to become masters of Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Essex, and Wessex.

A stout resistance to the invading Saxons had been made by the native Britons, headed by Arthur,—a legendary hero, who is thought to have lived near the close of the fifth century. His deeds and those of the knights of the Round Table form the subject of one of the most interesting romances of the Middle Ages, probably written in the brightest age of chivalry, and by a monk very ignorant of history, since he gives many Norman names to his characters. But all the valor of the Celtic hero and his chivalrous followers was of no avail before the fierce and persistent attacks of a hardier race, bent on the possession of a fairer land than their own.

We know but little of the details of the various conflicts until Britain was finally won by these predatory tribes of barbarians. The stubborn resistance of the Britons led to their final retreat or complete extermination, and with their disappearance also perished what remained of the Roman civilization. The resistance of the Britons was much more obstinate than that of any of the other provinces of the Empire; but, as the forces arrayed against them were comparatively small, the work of conquest was slow. "It took thirty years to win Kent alone, and sixty to complete the conquest of south Britain, and nearly two hundred to subdue the whole island." But when the conquest was made it was complete, and England was Saxon, in language, in institutions, and in manners; while France retained much

of the language, habits, and institutions of the Romans, and even of the old Gaulish elements of society. England became a German nation on the complete wreck of everything Roman, whose peculiar characteristic was the freedom of those who tilled the land or gathered around the military standard of their chieftains. It was the gradual transfer of a whole German nation from the Elbe and Rhine to the Thames and the Humber, with their original village institutions, under the rule of their *eorls*, with the simple addition of kings,—unknown in their original settlements, but brought about by the necessities which military life and conquest produced.

After the conquest we find seven petty kings, who ruled in different parts of the island. Jealousies, wars, and marriages soon reduced their number to three, ruling over Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria. All the people of these kingdoms were Pagan, the chief deity of whom was Woden. It was not till the middle of the seventh century that Christianity was introduced into Wessex, although Kent and Northumbria received Christian missionaries half-a-century earlier. The beautiful though well-known tradition of the incidents which led to the introduction of the Christian religion deserves a passing mention. About the middle of the sixth century some Saxons taken in war, in one of the quarrels of rival kings, and hence made slaves, were exposed for sale in Rome. Gregory the Great, then simply deacon, passing by the market-place, observed their fair faces, white bodies, blue eyes, and golden hair, and inquired of the slave-dealer who they



were. "They are English, or Angles." "No, not Angles," said the pious and poetic deacon; "they are angels, with faces so angelic. From what country did they come?" "From Deira." "*De Ira!* ay, plucked from God's wrath. What is the name of their king?" "Ella." "Ay, let alleluia be sung in their land." It need scarcely be added that when this pious and witty deacon became pope he remembered these Saxon slaves, and sent Augustin (or Austin,—not to be confounded with Augustine of Hippo, who lived nearly two centuries earlier), with forty monks as missionaries to convert the pagan Saxons. They established themselves in Kent A.D. 597, which became the seat of the first English bishopric, through the favor of the king, Aethelbert, whose wife Clotilda, a French princess, had been previously converted. Soon after, Essex followed the example of Kent; and then Northumbria. Wessex was the last of the Saxon kingdoms to be converted, their inhabitants being especially fierce and warlike.

It is singular that no traces of Christianity seem to have been left in Britain on the completion of the Saxon conquest, although it had been planted there as early as the time of Constantine. Helena was a Christian, and Pelagius and Celestine were British monks. But the Saxon conquest eradicated all that was left of Roman influence and institutions.

When Christianity had once acquired a foothold among the Saxons its progress was rapid. In no country were monastic institutions more firmly planted. Monasteries and churches were erected in the principal settlements and liberally endowed by

the Saxon kings. In Kent were the great sees of Canterbury and Rochester; in Essex was London; in East Anglia was Norwich; in Wessex was Winchester; in Mercia were Lichfield, Leicester, Worcester, and Hereford; in Northumbria were York, Durham, and Ripon. Each cathedral had its schools and convents. Christianity became the law of the land, and entered largely into all the Saxon codes. There was a constant immigration of missionaries into Britain, and the great sees were filled with distinguished ecclesiastics, frequently from the continent, since a strong union was cemented between Rome and the English churches. Prince and prelate made frequent pilgrimages to the old capital of the world, and were received with distinguished honors. The monasteries were filled with princes and nobles and ladies of rank. As early as the eighth century monasteries were enormously multiplied and enriched, for the piety of the Saxons assumed a monastic type. What civilization existed can be traced chiefly to the Church.

We read of only three great names among the Saxons who impressed their genius on the nation, until the various Saxon kingdoms were united under the sovereignty of Ecgberht, or Egbert, king of Wessex, about the middle of the ninth century. These were Theodore, Caedmon, and Baeda. The first was a monk from Tarsus, whom the Pope dispatched in the year 668 to Britain as Archbishop of Canterbury. To him the work of church organization was intrusted. He enlarged the number of the sees, and arranged them on the basis which was maintained for a

thousand years. The subordination of priest to bishop and bishop to primate was more clearly defined by him. He also assembled councils for general legislation, which perhaps led the way to national parliaments. He not only organized the episcopate, but the parish system, and even the system of tithes has been by some attributed to him. The missionary who had been merely the chaplain of a nobleman became the priest of the manor or parish.

The second memorable man was born a cowherd; encouraged to sing his songs by the abbess Hilda, a "Northumbrian Deborah." When advanced in life he entered through her patronage a convent, and sang the marvellous and touching stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, fixing their truths on the mind of the nation, and becoming the father of English poetry.

The third of these great men was the greatest, Baeda,—or Bede, as the name is usually spelled. He was a priest of the great abbey church of Weremouth, in Northumbria, and was a master of all the learning then known. He was the life of the famous school of Jarrow, and it is said that six hundred monks, besides strangers, listened to his teachings. His greatest work was an "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation," which extends from the landing of Julius Caesar to the year 731. He was the first English historian, and the founder of mediaeval history, and all we know of the one hundred and fifty years after the landing of Augustin the missionary is drawn from him. He was not only historian, but theologian,—the father of the education of the English nation.

It was one hundred and fourteen years after the death of the "venerable Bede" before Alfred was born, A.D. 849, the youngest son of Aethelwulf, king of Wessex, who united under his rule all the Saxon kingdoms. The mother of Alfred was Osburgha, a German princess of extraordinary force of character. From her he received, at the age of four, the first rudiments of education, and learned to sing those Saxon ballads which he afterwards recited with so much effect in the Danish camp. At the age of five Alfred was sent to Rome, probably to be educated, where he remained two years, visiting on his return the court of Charles the Bald,—the centre of culture in Western Europe. The celebrated Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims,—the greatest churchman of the age,—was the most influential minister of the king; at whose table also sat John Erigena, then engaged in a controversy with Gotteschalk, the German monk, about the presence of Christ in the eucharist,—the earliest notable theological controversy after the Patristic age. Alfred was too young to take an interest in this profound discussion; but he may perhaps have received an intellectual impulse from his visit to Rome and Paris, which affected his whole subsequent life.

About this time his father, over sixty years of age, married a French princess of the name of Judith, only fourteen years of age,—even in that rude age a great scandal, which nearly resulted in his dethronement. He lived but two years longer; and his youthful widow, to the still greater scandal of the realm and Church, married her late husband's eldest son, Ethelbald,

who inherited the crown. It was through this woman, and her subsequent husband Baldwin, called *Bras de Fer*, Count of Flanders, that the English kings, since the Conqueror, trace their descent from Alfred and Charlemagne; for her son, the second Count of Flanders, married Elfrida, the daughter of Alfred. From this union descended the Conqueror's wife Matilda. Thus the present royal family of England can trace a direct descent through William the Conqueror, Alfred, and Charlemagne, and is allied by blood, remotely indeed, with most of the reigning princes of Europe.

The three elder brothers of Alfred reigned successively over Wessex,—to whom all England owned allegiance. It was during their short reigns that the great invasion of the Danes took place, which reduced the whole island to desolation and misery. These Danes were of the same stock as the Saxons, but more enterprising and bold. It seems that they drove the Saxons before them, as the Saxons, three hundred years before, had driven the Britons. In their destructive ravages they sacked and burned Croyland, Peterborough, Huntingdon, Ely, and other wealthy abbeys,—the glory of the kingdom,—together with their valuable libraries.

It was then that Alfred (already the king's most capable general) began his reign, A.D. 871, at the age of twenty-three, on the death of his brother Ethelred,—a brave and pious prince, mortally wounded at the battle of Merton.

It was Alfred's memorable struggle with the Danes which

gave to him his military fame. When he ascended the throne these barbarians had gained a foothold, and in a few years nearly the whole of England was in their hands. Wave followed wave in the dreadful invasion; fleet after fleet and army after army was destroyed, and the Saxons were driven nearly to despair, for added to the evils of pillage and destruction were pestilence and famine, the usual attendants of desolating wars. In the year 878 the heroic leader of the disheartened people was compelled to hide himself, with a few faithful followers, in the forest of Selwood, amid the marshes of Somersetshire. Yet Alfred—a fugitive—succeeded at last in rescuing his kingdom of Wessex from the dominion of Pagan barbarians, and restoring it to a higher state of prosperity than it had ever attained before. He preserved both Christianity and civilization. For these exalted services he is called "the Great;" and no prince ever more heroically earned the title.

"It is hard," says Hughes, who has written an interesting but not exhaustive life of Alfred, "to account for the sudden and complete collapse of the West Saxon power in January, 878, since in the campaign of the preceding year Alfred had been successful both by sea and land." Yet such seems to have been the fact, whatever may be its explanation. No such panic had ever overcome the Britons, who made a more stubborn resistance. No prince ever suffered a severer humiliation than did the Saxon monarch during the dreary winter of 878; but, according to Asser, it was for his ultimate good. Alfred was deeply and

sincerely religious, and like David saw the hand of God in all his misfortunes. In his case adversity proved the school of greatness. For six months he was hidden from public view, lost sight of entirely by his afflicted subjects, enduring great privations, and gaining a scanty subsistence. There are several popular legends about his life in the marshes, too well known to be described,—one about the cakes and another about his wanderings to the Danish camp disguised as a minstrel, both probable enough; yet, if true, they show an extraordinary depth of misfortunes.

At last his subjects began to rally. It was known by many that Alfred was alive. Bodies of armed followers gradually gathered at his retreat. He was strongly intrenched; and occasionally he issued from his retreat to attack straggling bands, or to make reconnoissance of the enemy's forces. In May, 878, he left his fortified position and met some brave and faithful subjects at Egbert's Stone, twenty miles to the east of Selwood. The gathering had been carefully planned and secretly made, and was unknown to the Danes. His first marked success was at Edington, or Ethandune, where the Pagan host lay encamped, near Westbury. We have no definite knowledge of the number of men engaged in that bloody and desperate battle, in which the Saxons were greatly outnumbered by the Danes, who were marshalled under a chieftain called Guthrun. But the battle was decisive, and made Alfred once more master of England south of the Thames. Guthrun, now in Alfred's power, was the ablest warrior that the Northmen had as yet produced. He was shut up

in an inland fort, with no ships on the nearest river, and with no hope of reinforcements. At the end of two weeks he humbly sued for peace, offering to quit Wessex for good, and even to embrace the Christian religion. Strange as it may seem, Alfred granted his request,—either, with profound statesmanship, not wishing to drive a desperate enemy to extremities, or seeking his conversion. The remains of the discomfited Pagan host crossed over into Mercia, and gave no further trouble. Never was a conquest attended with happier results. Guthrun (with thirty of his principal nobles) was baptized into the Christian faith, and received the Saxon name of Athelstan. But East Anglia became a Danish kingdom. The Danes were not expelled from England. Their settlement was permanent. The treaty of Wedmore confirmed them in their possessions. Alfred by this treaty was acknowledged as undisputed master of England south of the Thames; of Wessex and Essex, including London, Hertford, and St. Albans; of the whole of Mercia west of Watling Street,—the great road from London to Chester; but the Danes retained also one half of England, which shows how formidable they were, even in defeat. The Danes and the Saxons, it would seem, commingled, and gradually became one nation.

The great Danish invasion of the ninth century was successful, since it gave half of England to the Pagans. It is a sad thing to contemplate. Civilization was doubtless retarded. Whole districts were depopulated, and monasteries and churches were ruthlessly destroyed, with their libraries and works of art. This could



not have happened without a fearful demoralization among the Saxons themselves. They had become prosperous, and their wealth was succeeded by vices, especially luxury and sloth. Their wealth tempted the more needy of the adventurers from the North, who succeeded in their aggressions because they were stronger than the Saxons. So slow was the progress of England in civilization. As soon as it became centralized under a single monarch, it was subjected to fresh calamities. It would seem that the history of those ages is simply the history of violence and spoliations. There was the perpetual waste of human energies. Barbarism seemed to be stronger than civilization. Nor in this respect was the condition of England unique. The same public misfortunes happened in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. For five hundred years Europe was the scene of constant strife. Not until the Normans settled in England were the waves of barbaric invasion arrested.

The Danish conquest made a profound impression on Alfred, and stimulated him to renewed efforts to preserve what still remained of Christian civilization. His whole subsequent life was spent in actual war with the Northmen, or in preparations for war. It was remarkable that he succeeded as well as he did, for after all he was the sovereign of scarcely half the territory that Egbert had won, and over which his grandfather and father had ruled. He preserved Wessex; and in preserving Wessex he saved England, which would have been replunged in barbarism but for his perseverance, energy, and courage. That Danish invasion

was a chastisement not undeserved, for both the clergy and the laity had become corrupt, had been enervated by prosperity. The clergy especially were lazy and ignorant; not one in a thousand could write a common letter of salutation. They had fattened on the contributions of princes and of the credulous people; they saw the destruction of their richest and proudest abbeys, and their lands seized by Pagan barbarians, who settled down in them as lords of the soil, especially in Northumbria. But Alfred at least arrested their further progress, and threw them on the defensive. He knew that the recovery of the conquests which the Saxons had made was a work of exceeding difficulty. It was necessary to make great preparations for future struggles, as peace with the Danes was only a truce. They aimed at the complete conquest of the island, and they sought to rouse the hostility of the Welsh.

Alfred showed a wise precaution against future assaults in constructing fortresses at the most important points within his control. Before his day the Saxons had but few fortified positions, and this want of forts had greatly facilitated the Danish conquest. But the Danes, as soon as they gained a strong position, fortified it, and were never afterwards ejected by force. Probably Alfred took the hint from them. He rebuilt and strengthened the fortresses along the coast, as he had four precious years of unmolested work; and for this his small kingdom was doubtless severely taxed. He imported skilled workmen, and adopted the newest improvements. He made use of stone instead of timber, and extended his works of construction to palaces, halls, and

churches, as well as castles. So well built were his fortifications, that no strong place was ever afterwards wrested from him. In those times the defence of kingdoms was in castles. They marked the feudal ages equally with monasteries and cathedral churches. Castles protected the realm from invasion and conquest, as much as they did the family of a feudal noble. The wisdom as well as the necessity of fortified cities was seen in a marked manner when the Northmen, in 885, stole up the Thames and Medway and made an unexpected assault on Rochester. They were completely foiled, and were obliged to retreat to their ships, leaving behind them even the spoil they had brought from France. This successful resistance was a great moral assistance to Alfred, since it opened the eyes of bishops and nobles to the necessity of fortifying their towns, to which they had hitherto been opposed, being unwilling to incur the expense. So it was not long before Alfred had a complete chain of defences on the coast, as well as around his cities and palaces, able to resist sudden attacks,—which he had most to fear. His great work of fortification was that of London, which, though belonging to him by the peace of Wedmore, was neglected, fallen to decay, filled with lawless bands of marauders and pirates, and defenceless against attack. In 886 he marched against this city, which made no serious resistance; rebuilt it, made it habitable, fortified it, and encouraged people to settle in it, for he foresaw its vast commercial importance. Under the rule of his son Ethelred, it regained the pre-eminence it had enjoyed under the Romans as

a commercial centre.

Having done what he could to protect his dominion from sudden attacks, Alfred then turned his attention to the reorganization of his army and navy. Strictly speaking he had no regular army, or standing force, which he could call his own. When the country was threatened the freemen flew to arms, under their eorls and ealdormen; and on this force the king was obliged to rely. They sometimes acted without his orders, obeying the calls of their leaders when danger was most imminent. On the men in the immediate neighborhood of danger the brunt of the contest fell. Nor could levies be relied upon for any length of time; they dwindled after a few weeks, in order to attend to their agricultural interests, for agriculture was the only great and permanent pursuit in the feudal ages. Everything was subordinate to labors in the field. The only wealth was in land, except what was hoarded by the clergy and nobles.

How well Alfred paid his soldiers it is difficult to determine. His own private means were large, and the Crown lands were very extensive. One-third of his income was spent upon his army. But it is not probable that a large force was under pay in time of peace; yet he had always one third of his forces ready to act promptly against an enemy. The burden of the service was distributed over the whole kingdom. The main feature of his military reform seems to have been in the division of his forces into three bodies, only one of which was liable to be called upon for service at a time, except in great emergencies. In regard to

tactics, or changes in armor and mode of fighting, we know nothing; for war as an art or science did not exist in any Teutonic kingdom; it was lost with, the fall of the Roman Empire. How far Alfred was gifted with military genius we are unable to say, beyond courage, fertility of resources, activity of movement, and a marvellous patience. His greatest qualities were moral, like those of Washington. It is his reproachless character, and his devotion to duty, and love of his people which impress us from first to last. As has been said of Marcus Aurelius, Alfred was a Saint Anselm on a throne. He had none of those turbulent and restless qualities which we associate with mediaeval kings. What a contrast between him and William the Conqueror!

Alfred also gave his attention to the construction of a navy, as well as to the organization of an army, knowing that it was necessary to resist the Northmen on the ocean and prevent their landing on the coast. In 875 he had fought a naval battle with success, and had taken one of the ships of the sea-kings, which furnished him with a model to build his own ships,—doing the same thing that the Romans did in their early naval warfare with the Carthaginians. In 877 he destroyed a Danish fleet on its way to relieve Exeter. But he soon made considerable improvement on the ships of his enemies, making them twice as long as those of the Danes, with a larger number of oars. These were steadier and swifter than the older vessels. As the West Saxons were not a seafaring people, he employed and munificently rewarded men from other nations more accustomed to the sea,—whether

Frisians, Franks, Britons, Scots, or even Danes. The result was, he was never badly beaten at sea, and before the end of his reign he had swept the coast clear of pirates. Within two years from the treaty of Wedmore his fleet was ready for action. He was prepared to meet the sea-kings on equal terms, and in 882 he had gained an important naval battle over a fleet that was meditating an invasion.

In the year 885 the Danes again invaded England and laid siege to Rochester, but fled to their ships on the approach of Alfred. They were pursued by the Saxon king and defeated with great slaughter, sixteen Danish vessels being destroyed and their crews put to the sword. Nor had Guthrun Athelstan, the ex-viking, been true to his engagements. He had allowed two additional settlements of Danes on the East Anglian coasts, and had even assisted Alfred's enemies. Their defeat, however, induced him to live peaceably in East Anglia until he died in 890. These successes of Alfred secured peace with the Danes for eight more years, during which he pursued his various schemes for the improvement of his people, and in preparations for future wars. He had put his kingdom in a state of defence, and now turned his attention to legislation,—the supremest labor of an enlightened monarch.

The laws of Alfred wear a close resemblance to those which Moses gave to the Hebrews, and moreover are pervaded with Christian ideas. His aim seems to have been to recognize in his jurisprudence the supreme obedience which is due to the laws

of God. In all the laws of the converted Teutonic nations, from Charlemagne down, we notice the influence of the Christian clergy in modifying the severity of the old Pagan codes. Alfred did not aim to be an original legislator, like Moses or Solon, but selected from the Mosaic code, and also from the laws of Ethelbert, Ina, Offa, and other Saxon princes, those regulations which he considered best adapted to the circumstances of the people whom he governed. He recognized more completely than any of his predecessors the rights of property, and attached great sanctity to oaths. Whoever violated his pledge was sentenced to imprisonment. He raised the dignity of ealdormen and bishops to that of the highest rank. He made treason against the royal authority the gravest offence known to the laws, and all were deemed traitors who should presume to draw the sword in the king's house. He made new provisions for personal security, and severely punished theft and robbery of every kind, especially of the property of the Church. He bestowed freedom on slaves after six years of service. Some think he instituted trial by jury. Like Theodosius and Charlemagne, he gave peculiar privileges to the clergy as a counterpoise to the lawlessness of nobles.

One of the peculiarities of his legislation was compensation for crime,—seen alike in the Mosaic dispensation and in the old customs of the Germanic nations in their native forests. On conviction, the culprit was compelled to pay a sum of money to the relatives of the injured, and another sum to the community at large. This compensation varied according to the rank of

the injured party,—and rank was determined by wealth. The owner of two hydes of land was ranked above a ceorl, or simple farmer, while the owner of twelve hydes was a royal thane. In the compensation for crime the gradation was curious: twelve shillings would pay for the loss of a foot, ten for a great toe, and twenty for a thumb. If a man robbed his equal, he was compelled to pay threefold; if he robbed the king, he paid ninefold; and if he robbed the church, he was obliged to return twelvefold: hence the robbery of ecclesiastical property was attended with such severe penalties that it was unusual. In some cases theft was punished with death.

The code of Alfred was severe, but in an age of crime and disorder severity was necessary. He also instituted a vigorous police, and divided the country into counties, and these again into hundreds or parishes, each of which was made responsible for the maintenance of order and the detection of crime. He was severe on judges when they passed sentence irrespective of the rights of jurors. He did not emancipate slaves, but he ameliorated their condition and limited their term of compulsory service. Burglary in the king's house was punished by a fine of one hundred and twenty shillings; in an archbishop's, at ninety; in a bishop's or ealdorman's, at sixty; in the house of a man of twelve hydes, at thirty shillings; in a six-hyde man's, at fifteen; in a churl's, at five shillings,—the fine being graded according to the rank of him whose house had been entered. There was a rigorous punishment for working on Sunday: if a theow, by order of his



lord, the lord had to pay a penalty of thirty shillings; if without the lord's order, he was condemned to be flogged. If a freeman worked without his lord's order, he had to pay sixty shillings or forfeit his freedom. If a man was found burning a tree in a forest, he was obliged to pay a fine of sixty shillings, in order to protect the forest; or if he cut down a tree under which thirty swine might stand, he was obliged to pay a fine of sixty shillings. These penalties seem severe, but they were inflicted for offences difficult to be detected and frequently committed. We infer from these various fines that burglary, robbery, petty larcenies, and brawls were the most common offences against the laws.

One of the greatest services which Alfred rendered to the cause of civilization in England was in separating judicial from executive functions. The old eorls and ealdormen were warriors; and yet to them had been committed the administration of justice, which they often abused,—frequently deciding cases against the verdicts of jurors, and sometimes unjustly dooming innocent men to capital punishment. Alfred hanged an ealdorman or alderman, one Freberne, for sentencing Haspin to death when the jury was in doubt. He even hanged twenty-four inferior officers, on whom judicial duties devolved, for palpable injustice.

The love of justice and truth was one of the main traits of Alfred's character, and he painfully perceived that the ealdormen of shires, though faithful and valiant warriors, were not learned and impartial enough to administer justice. There was scarcely

one of them who could read the written law, or who had any extensive acquaintance with the common law or the usages which had been in force from time immemorial,—as far back as in the original villages of Germany. Moreover, the poor and defenceless had need of protection. They always had needed it, for in Pagan and barbarous countries their rights were too often disregarded. When brute force bore everything before it, it became both the duty and privilege of the king, who represented central power, to maintain the rights of the humblest of his people,—to whom he was a father. To see justice enforced is the most exalted of the prerogatives of sovereigns; and no one appreciated this delegation of sovereign power from the Universal Father more than Alfred, the most conscientious and truth-loving of all the kings of the Middle Ages.

So, to maintain justice, Alfred set aside the ignorant and passionate ealdormen, and appointed judges whose sole duty it was to interpret and enforce the laws, and men best fitted to represent the king in the royal courts. They were sent through the shires to see that justice was done, and to report the decisions of the county courts. Thus came into existence the judges of assize,—an office or institution which remains to this day, amid all the revolutions of English thought and life, and all the changes which politics and dynasties have wrought.

Nor did Alfred rest with a reform of the law courts. He defined the boundaries of shires, which divisions are very old, and subdivided them into parishes, which have remained to this

day. He gave to each hundred its court, from which appeals were made to a court representing several hundreds,—about three to each county. Each hundred was subdivided into tythings, or companies of ten neighboring householders, who were held as mutual sureties or frank (free) pledges for each other's orderly conduct; so that each man was a member of a tything, and was obliged to keep household rolls of his servants. Thus every liegeman was known to the law, and was taught his duties and obligations; and every tything was responsible for the production of its criminals, and obliged to pay a fine if they escaped. Every householder was liable to answer for any stranger who might stop at his house. "This mutual liability or suretyship was the pivot of all Alfred's administrative reform, and wrought a remarkable change in the kingdom, so that merchants and travellers could go about without armed guards. The forests were emptied of outlaws, and confidence and security succeeded distrust and lawlessness.... The frank pledge-system, which was worked in country districts, was supplied in towns by the machinery of the guilds,—institutions combining the benefit of modern clubs, insurance societies, and trades-unions. As a rule, they were limited to members of one trade or calling."

Mr. Pearson, in his history of England, as quoted by Hughes, thus sums up this great administrative reform for the preservation of life and property and order during the Middle Ages:—

"What is essential to remember is, that life and property were not secured to the Anglo-Saxon by the State, but by the loyal

union of his fellow-citizens; the Saxon guilds are unmatched in the history of their times as evidences of self-reliance, mutual trust, patient self-restraint, and orderly love of law among a young people, "To recapitulate the reforms of Alfred in the administration of justice and the resettlement of the country, the old divisions of shires were carefully readjusted, and divided into hundreds and tythings. The alderman of the shire still remained the chief officer, but the office was no longer hereditary. The king appointed the alderman, or eorl, who was president of the shire gemot, or council, and chief judge of the county court as well as governor of the shire, but was assisted and probably controlled in his judicial capacity by justices appointed by the king, and not attached to the shire, or in any way dependent on the alderman. The vice-domini, or nominees of the alderman, were abolished, and an officer substituted for them called the reeve of the shire, or sheriff, who carried out the decrees of the courts. The hundreds and tythings were represented by their own officers, and had their hundred-courts and courts-leet, which exercised a trifling criminal jurisdiction, but were chiefly assemblies answering to our grand juries and parish vestries. All householders were members of them, and every man thus became responsible for keeping the king's peace."

In regard to the financial resources of Alfred we know but little. Probably they were great, considering the extent and population of the little kingdom over which he ruled, but inconsiderable in comparison with the revenues of England

at the present day. To build fortresses, construct a navy, and keep in pay a considerable military force,—to say nothing of his own private expenditure and the expense of his court, his public improvements, the endowment of churches, the support of schools, the relief of the poor, and keeping the highways and bridges in repair,—required a large income. This was derived from the public revenues, crown lands, and private property. The public revenue was raised chiefly by customs, tolls, and fines. The crown lands were very extensive, as well as the private property of the sovereign, as he had large estates in every county of his kingdom.

But whatever his income, he set apart one quarter of it for religious purposes, one-sixth for architecture, and one-eighth for the poor, besides a considerable sum for foreigners, whom he liberally patronized. He richly endowed schools and monasteries. He was devoted to the Church, and his relations with the Pope were pleasant and intimate, although more independent than those of many of his successors.

All the biographers of Alfred speak of his zealous efforts in behalf of education. He established a school for the young nobles of his court, and taught them himself. His teachers were chiefly learned men drawn from the continent, especially from the Franks, and were well paid by the king. He made the scholarly Asser—a Welsh monk, afterwards bishop of Sherborne, from whose biography of Alfred our best information is derived—his counsellor and friend, and from his instructions acquired much

knowledge. To Asser he gave the general superintendence of education, not merely for laymen, but for priests. In his own words, he declared that his wish was that all free-born youth should persevere in learning until they could read the English Scriptures. For those who desired to devote themselves to the Church, he provided the means for the study of Latin. He gave all his children a good education. His own thirst for knowledge was remarkable, considering his cares and public duties. He copied the prayer-book with his own hands, and always carried it in his bosom, Asser read to him all the books which were then accessible. From an humble scholar the king soon became an author. He translated "Consolations of Philosophy" from the Latin of Boethius, a Roman senator of the sixth century,—the most remarkable literary effort of the declining days of the Roman Empire, and highly prized in the Middle Ages. He also translated the "Chronicle of the World," by Orosius, a Spanish priest, who lived in the early part of the fifth century,—a work suggested by Saint Augustine's "City of God." The "Ecclesiastical History" of Bede was also translated by Alfred. He is said to have translated the Proverbs of Solomon and the Fables of Aesop. His greatest literary work, however, was the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the principal authority of the reign of Alfred. No man of his day wrote the Saxon language so purely as did Alfred himself; and he was distinguished not only for his knowledge of Latin, but for profound philosophical reflections interspersed through his writings, which would do honor to a

Father of the Church. He was also a poet, inferior only to Caedmon. Nor was his knowledge confined to literature alone; it was extended to the arts, especially architecture, ship-building, and silver-workmanship. He built more beautiful edifices than any of his predecessors. He also had a knowledge of geography beyond his contemporaries, and sent a Norwegian ship-master to explore the White Sea. He enriched his translation of Orosius by a sketch of the new geographical discoveries in the North. In fact, there was scarcely any branch of knowledge then known in which Alfred was not well instructed,—being a remarkably learned man for his age, and as enlightened as he was learned.

But in the midst of his reforms and wise efforts to civilize his people, the war-clouds gathered once more, and he was obliged to put forth all his energies to defend his realm from the incursions of his old enemies. The death of Charles the Bald in the year 877 left France in a very disordered state, and the Northmen under Hasting, one of the greatest of their vikings, recommenced their ravages. In 893 they crossed the Channel in two hundred and fifty vessels, and invaded England, followed soon after by Hasting with another large detachment, and strongly intrenched themselves near Winchester. Alfred at the same time strongly fortified his own position, about thirty miles distant, and kept so close a watch over the movements of his enemies that they rarely ventured beyond their own intrenchments. A sort of desultory warfare succeeded, and continued for a year without any decisive results. At last the

Danes, getting weary, broke up their camps, and resolved to pass into East Anglia. They were met by Alfred at Farnham and forced to fight, which resulted in their defeat and the loss of all the spoils they had taken and all the horses they had brought from France. The discomfited Danes retreated, by means of their ships, to an island in the Thames, at its junction with the Colne, where they were invested by Alfred. They would soon have been at the mercy of the Saxon king, had it not unfortunately happened that the Danes on the east coast, from Essex to Northumbria, joined the invaders, which unlooked-for event compelled Alfred to raise the blockade, and send Ethelred his son to the west, where the Danes were again strongly intrenched at Banfleet, near London. Their camp was successfully stormed, and much booty was taken, together with the wife and sons of Hasting. The Danish fleet was also captured, and some of the vessels were sent to London. But Hasting still held out, in spite of his disaster, and succeeded in intrenching himself with the remnants of his army at Shoebury, ten miles from Banfleet, from which he issued on a marauding expedition along the northern banks of the Thames, carrying fire and sword wherever he went, thence turned northward, making no halt until he reached the banks of the Severn, where he again intrenched himself, but was again beaten. Hasting saved himself by falling back on a part of East Anglia removed from Alfred's influence, and appeared near Chester. Alfred himself had undertaken the task of guarding Exeter and the coasts of Devonshire and South Wales, where he



wintered, leaving Ethelred to pursue Hasting.

Thus a year passed in the successful defence of the kingdom, the Danes having gained no important advantage. At the end of the second campaign Hasting still maintained his ground and fortified himself on the Thames, within twenty miles of London. At the close of the third year, Hasting, being driven from his position on the Thames, established himself in Shropshire. "In the spring of 897 Hasting broke up his last camp on the English soil, being foiled at every point, and crossed the sea with the remnant of his followers to the banks of the Seine." The war was now virtually at an end, and the Danes utterly defeated.

The work for which Alfred was raised up was at last accomplished. He had stayed the inundations of the Northmen, defended his kingdom of Wessex, and planted the seeds of a higher civilization in England, winning the love and admiration of his subjects. The greatness of Alfred should not be measured by the size of his kingdom. It is not the bigness of a country that gives fame to its illustrious men. The immortal heroes of Palestine and Greece ruled over territories smaller and of less importance than the kingdom of Wessex. It is the greatness of their characters that preserves their name and memory.

Alfred died in the year 901, at the age of fifty-two, worn out with disease and labors, leaving his kingdom in a prosperous state; and it had rest under his son Edward for nine years. Then the contest was renewed with the Danes, and it was under the reign of Edward that Mercia was once more annexed to Wessex,

as well as Northumbria. Edward died in 925, and under the reign of his son Aethelstan the Saxon kingdom reached still greater prosperity. The completion of the West Saxon realm was reserved for Edmund, son of Aethelstan, who ascended the throne in 940, being a mere boy. He was ruled by the greatest statesman of that age, the celebrated Dunstan, Abbot of Glastonbury and Archbishop of Canterbury,—a great statesman and a great Churchman, like Hincmar of Rheims.

Thus the heroism and patience of Alfred were rewarded by the restoration of the Saxon power, and the absorption of what Mr. Green calls "Danelagh," after a long and bitter contest, of which Alfred was the greatest hero. In surveying his conquests we are reminded of the long contest which Charlemagne had with the Saxons. Next to Charlemagne, Alfred was the greatest prince who reigned in Europe after the dissolution of the Roman Empire, until the Norman Conquest. He fought not for the desire of bequeathing a great empire to his descendants, but to rescue his country from ruin, in the midst of overwhelming calamities. It was a struggle for national existence, not military glory. In the successful defence of his kingdom against the ravages of Pagan invaders he may be likened to William the Silent in preserving the nationality of Holland. No European monarch from the time of Alfred can be compared to him in the service he rendered to his country. The memorableness of a war is to be gauged not by the number of the combatants, but by the sacredness of a cause. It was the devotion of Washington to a great cause

which embalms his memory in the heart of the world. And no English king has left so hallowed a name as Alfred: it was because he was a benefactor, and infused his energy of purpose into a discouraged and afflicted people. How far his saint-like virtues were imitated it is difficult to tell. Religion was the groundwork of his character,—faith in God and devotion to duty. His piety was also more enlightened than the piety of his age, since it was practical and not ascetic. His temper was open, frank, and genial. He loved books and strangers and travellers. There was nothing cynical about him, in spite of his perplexities and discouragements. He had a beautifully balanced character and a many-sided nature. He had the power of inspiring confidence in defeat and danger. His judgment and good sense seemed to fit him for any emergency. He had the same control over himself that he had over others. His patriotism and singleness of purpose inspired devotion. He felt his burdens, but did not seek to throw them off. "Hardship and sorrow," said he, "not a king but would wish to be without these if he could; but I know he cannot." "So long as I have lived I have striven to live worthily." "I desire to leave to the men that come after me a remembrance of me in good works." These were some of his precious utterances, so that the love which he won a thousand years ago has lingered around his name from that day to this.

It was a strong sense of duty, quickened by a Christian life, which gave to the character of Alfred its peculiar radiance. He felt his responsibilities as a Christian ruler. He was affable,

courteous, accessible. His body was frail and delicate, but his energies were never relaxed. Pride and haughtiness were unknown in his intercourse with bishops or nobles. He had no striking defects. He was the model of a man and a king; and he left the impress of his genius on all the subsequent institutions of his country. "The tree," says Dr. Pauli, one of his ablest biographers, "which now casts its shadow far and near over the world, when menaced with destruction in its bud, was carefully guarded by Alfred; but at the period when it was ready to burst forth into a plant, he was forced to leave it to the influence of time. Many great men have occupied themselves with the care of this tree, and each in his own way has advanced its growth. William the Conqueror, with his iron hand, bent the tender branches to his will; Henry the Second ruled the Saxons with true Roman pride, but in *Magna Charta* the old German nature became aroused and worked powerfully, even among the barons. It became free under Edward the Third,—that prince so ambitious of conquest: the old language and the old law, the one somewhat altered, the other much softened, opened the path to a new era. The nation stood like an oak in the full strength of its leafy maturity; and to this strength the Reformation is indebted for its accomplishment. Elizabeth, the greatest woman who ever sat upon a throne, occupied a central position in a golden age of power and literature. Then came the Stuarts, who with their despotic ideas outraged the deeply-rooted Saxon individuality of the English, and by their fall contributed to the sure development

of that freedom which was founded so long before. The stern Cromwell and the astute William the Third aided in preparing for the now advanced nation that path in which it has ever since moved. The Anglo-Saxon race has already attained maturity in the New World, and, founded on these pillars, it will triumph in all places and in every age. Alfred's name will always be placed among those of the great spirits of this earth; and so long as men regard their past history with reverence they will not venture to bring forward any other in comparison with him who saved the West Saxon nation from complete destruction, and in whose heart all the virtues dwelt in such harmonious concord."

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# QUEEN ELIZABETH

**A.D. 1533-1603**

## WOMAN AS A SOVEREIGN

I do not present Queen Elizabeth either as a very interesting or as a faultless woman. As a woman she is not a popular favorite. But it is my object to present her as a queen; to show with what dignity and ability a woman may fill one of the most difficult and responsible stations of the world. It is certain that we associate with her a very prosperous and successful reign; and if she was lacking in those feminine qualities which make woman interesting to man, we are constrained to admire her for those talents and virtues which shed lustre around a throne. She is unquestionably one of the links in the history of England and of modern civilization; and her reign is so remarkable, considering the difficulties with which she had to contend, that she may justly be regarded as one of the benefactors of her age and country. It is a pleasant task to point out the greatness, rather than the defects, of so illustrious a woman.

It is my main object to describe her services to her country,

for it is by services that all monarchs are to be judged; and all sovereigns, especially those armed with great power, are exposed to unusual temptations, which must ever qualify our judgments. Even bad men—like Caesar, Richelieu, and Napoleon—have obtained favorable verdicts in view of their services. And when sovereigns whose characters have been sullied by weaknesses and defects, yet who have escaped great crimes and scandals and devoted themselves to the good of their country, have proved themselves to be wise, enlightened, and patriotic, great praise has been awarded to them. Thus, Henry IV. of France, and William III. of England have been admired in spite of their defects.

Queen Elizabeth is the first among the great female sovereigns of the world with whose reign we associate a decided progress in national wealth, power, and prosperity; so that she ranks with the great men who have administered kingdoms. If I can prove this fact, the sex should be proud of so illustrious a woman, and should be charitable to those foibles which sullied the beauty of her character, since they were in part faults of the age, and developed by the circumstances which surrounded her.

She was born in the year 1533, the rough age of Luther, when Charles V. was dreaming of establishing a united continental military empire, and when the princes of the House of Valois were battling with the ideas of the Reformation,—an earnest, revolutionary, and progressive age. She was educated as the second daughter of Henry VIII. naturally would be, having the celebrated Ascham as her tutor in Greek, Latin, French, and



Italian. She was precocious as well as studious, and astonished her teachers by her attainments. She was probably the best-educated woman in England next to Lady Jane Grey, and she excelled in those departments of knowledge for which novels have given such distaste in these more enlightened times.

Elizabeth was a mere girl when her mother, Anne Boleyn, was executed for infidelities and levities to which her husband could not be blind, had he been less suspicious,—a cruel execution, which nothing short of high-treason could have justified even in that rough age. Though her birth was declared to be illegitimate by her cruel and unscrupulous father, yet she was treated as a princess. She was seventeen when her hateful old father died; and during the six years when the government was in the hands of Somerset, Edward VI. being a minor, Elizabeth was exposed to no peculiar perils except those of the heart. It is said that Sir Thomas Seymour, brother to the Protector, made a strong impression on her, and that she would have married him had the Council consented. By nature, Elizabeth was affectionate, though prudent. Her love for Seymour was uncalculating and unselfish, though he was unworthy of it. Indeed, it was her misfortune always to misplace her affections,—which is so often the case in the marriages of superior women, as if they loved the image merely which their own minds created, as Dante did when he bowed down to Beatrice. When we see intellectual men choosing weak and silly women for wives, and women of exalted character selecting unworthy and wicked husbands, it does seem as if

Providence determines all matrimonial unions independently of our own wills and settled purposes. How often is wealth wedded to poverty, beauty to ugliness, and amiability to ill-temper! The hard, cold, unsocial, unsympathetic, wooden, scheming, selfish man is the only one who seems to attain his end, since he can bide his time,—wait for somebody to fancy him.

Elizabeth had that mixed character which made her life a perpetual conflict between her inclinations and her interests. Her generous impulses and affectionate nature made her peculiarly susceptible, while her prudence and her pride kept her from a foolish marriage. She may have loved unwisely, but she had sufficient self-control to prevent a *mésalliance*. While she may have resigned herself at times to the fascinations of accomplished men, she yet fathomed the abyss into which imprudence would bury her forever.

On the accession of Mary, her elder sister, daughter of Catharine of Aragon, Elizabeth's position was exceedingly critical, exposed as she was to the intrigues of the Catholics and the jealousy of the Queen. And when we remember that the great question and issue of that age was whether the Catholic or Protestant religion should have the ascendancy, and that this ascendancy seemed to hinge upon the private inclinations of the sovereign who in the furtherance of this great end would scruple at nothing to accomplish it, and that the greatest crimes committed for its sake would be justified by all the sophistries that religious partisanship could furnish, and be upheld by all

bigots and statesmen as well as priests, it is really remarkable that Elizabeth was spared. For Mary was not only urged on to the severest measures by Gardiner and Bonner (the bishops of Winchester and London), and by all the influences of Rome, to which she was devoted body and soul,—yea, by all her confidential advisers in the State, to save themselves from future contingencies,—but she was also jealous of her sister, as Elizabeth was afterwards jealous of Mary Stuart. And it would have been as easy for Mary to execute Elizabeth as it was for Elizabeth to execute the Queen of Scots, or Henry VIII. to behead his wives; and such a crime would have been excused as readily as the execution of Somerset or of the Lady Jane Grey, both from political necessity and religious expediency. Elizabeth was indeed subjected to great humiliations, and even compelled to sue for her life. What more piteous than her letter to Mary, begging only for an interview: "Wherefore I humbly beseech your Majesty to let me answer before yourself; and, once again kneeling with humbleness of heart, I earnestly crave to speak to your Highness, which I would not be so bold as to desire if I knew not myself most clear, as I know myself most true." Here is a woman pleading for her life to a sister to whom she had done no wrong, and whose only crime was in being that sister's heir. What an illustration of the jealousy of royalty and the bitterness of religious feuds; and what a contrast in this servile speech to that arrogance which Elizabeth afterward assumed towards her Parliament and greatest lords! Ah, to what cringing meanness are

most people reduced by adversity! In what pride are we apt to indulge in the hour of triumph! How circumstances change the whole appearance of our lives!

Elizabeth, however, in order to save her life, was obliged to dissemble. If her true Protestant opinions had been avowed, I doubt if she could have escaped. We do not see in this dissimulation anything very lofty; yet she acted with singular tact and discretion. It is creditable, however, to Mary that she did not execute her sister. She showed herself more noble than Elizabeth did later in her treatment of the Queen of Scots. History calls her the "Bloody Mary;" and it must be admitted that she was the victim and slave of religious bigotry, and that she sanctioned many bloody executions. And yet it would appear that her nature was, after all, affectionate, which is evinced in the fact that she did spare the life of Elizabeth. Here her better impulses gained the victory over craft and policy and religious intolerance, and rescued her name from the infamy to which such a crime would have doomed her, and which her Church would have sanctioned, and in which it would have rejoiced as much as it did in the slaughter of Saint Bartholomew.

The crocodile tears which Elizabeth is said to have shed when the death of her sister Mary was announced to her at Hatfield were soon wiped away in the pomps and enthusiasms which hailed her accession to the throne. This was in 1558, when she was twenty-five, in the fulness of her attractions and powers. Great expectations were formed of her wisdom and genius. She

had passed through severe experiences; she had led a life of study and reflection; she was gifted with talents and graces. "Her accomplishments, her misfortunes, and her brilliant youth exalted into passionate homage the principle of loyalty, and led to extravagant panegyrics." She was good-looking, if she was not beautiful, since the expression of her countenance showed benignity, culture, and vivacity. She had piercing dark eyes, a clear complexion, and animated features. She was in perfect health, capable of great fatigue, apt in business, sagacious, industrious, witty, learned, and fond of being surrounded with illustrious men. She was high-church in her sympathies, yet a Protestant in the breadth of her views and in the fulness of her reforms. Above all, she was patriotic and disinterested in her efforts to develop the resources of her kingdom and to preserve it from entangling wars.

The kingdom was far from being prosperous when Elizabeth assumed the reins of government, and it is the enormous stride in civilization which England made during her reign, beset with so many perils, which constitutes her chief claim to the admiration of mankind. Let it be borne in mind that she began her rule in perplexities, anxieties, and embarrassments. The crown was encumbered with debts; the nobles were ambitious and factious; the people were poor, dispirited, unimportant, and distracted by the claims of two hostile religions. Only one bishop in the whole realm was found willing to crown her. Scotland was convulsed with factions, and was a standing menace, growing out of the

marriage of Mary Stuart with a French prince. Barbarous Ireland was in a state of chronic rebellion; France, Spain, and Rome were decidedly hostile; and all Catholic Europe aimed at the overthrow of England. Philip II. had adopted the dying injunction of his father to extinguish the Protestant religion, and the princes of the House of Valois were leagued with Rome for the attainment of this end. At home, Elizabeth had to contend with a jealous Parliament, a factious nobility, an empty purse, and a divided people. The people generally were rude and uneducated; the language was undeveloped; education was chiefly confined to nobles and priests; the poor were oppressed by feudal laws. No great work in English history, poetry, or philosophy had yet appeared. The comforts and luxuries of life were scarcely enjoyed even by the rich. Chimneys were just beginning to be used. The people slept on mats of straw; they ate without forks on pewter or wooden platters; they drank neither tea nor coffee, but drank what their ancestors did in the forests of Germany,—beer; their houses, thatched with straw, were dark, dingy, and uncomfortable. Commerce was small; manufactures were in their infancy; the coin was debased, and money was scarce; trade was in the hands of monopolists; coaches were almost unknown; the roads were impassable except for horsemen, and were infested with robbers; only the rich could afford wheaten bread; agricultural implements were of the most primitive kind; animal food, for the greater part of the year, was eaten only in a salted state; enterprise of all kinds was restricted within

narrow limits; beggars and vagrants were so numerous that the most stringent laws were necessary to protect the people against them; profane swearing was nearly universal; the methods of executing capital punishments were revolting; the rudest sports amused the people; the parochial clergy were ignorant and sensual; country squires sought nothing higher than fox-hunting; it took several days for letters to reach the distant counties; the population numbered only four millions; there was nothing grand and imposing in art but the palaces of nobles and the Gothic monuments of mediaeval Europe.

Such was "Merrie England" on the accession of Elizabeth to the throne,—a rude nation of feudal nobles, rural squires, and ignorant people, who toiled for a mere pittance on the lands of cold, unsympathetic masters; without books, without schools, without privileges, without rights, except to breathe the common air and indulge in coarse pleasures and religious holidays and village fêtes.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the people were loyal, religious, and brave; that they had the fear of God before their eyes, and felt personal responsibility to Him, so that crimes were uncommon except among the lowest and most abandoned; that family ties were strong; that simple hospitalities were everywhere exercised; that healthy pleasures stimulated no inordinate desires; that the people, if poor, had enough to eat and drink; that service was not held to be degrading; that churches were not deserted; that books, what few there were,

did not enervate or demoralize; that science did not attempt to ignore the moral government of God; that laws were a terror to evil-doers; that philanthropists did not seek to reform the world by mechanical inventions, or elevate society by upholding the majesty of man rather than the majesty of God,—teaching the infallibility of congregated masses of ignorance, inexperience, and conceit. Even in those rude times there were the certitudes of religious faith, of domestic endearments, of patriotic devotion, of respect for parents, of loyalty to rulers, of kindness to the poor and miserable; there were the latent fires of freedom, the impulses of generous enthusiasm, and resignation to the ills which could not be removed. So that in England, in Elizabeth's time, there was a noble material for Christianity and art and literature to work upon, and to develop a civilization such as had not existed previously on this earth,—a civilization destined to spread throughout the world in new institutions, inventions, laws, language, and literature, binding hostile races together, and proclaiming the sovereignty of intelligence,—the [Greek: nous kratei] of the old Ionian philosophers,—with that higher sovereignty which Moses based upon the Ten Commandments, and that higher law still which Jesus taught upon the Mount.

Yet with all this fine but rude material for future greatness, it was nevertheless a glaring fact that the condition of England on the accession of Elizabeth was most discouraging,—a poor and scattered agricultural nation, without a navy of any size, without a regular army, with factions in every quarter, with struggling



and contending religious parties, with a jealous parliament of unenlightened country squires; yet a nation seriously threatened by the most powerful monarchies of the Continent, who detested the doctrines which were then taking root in the land. Against the cabals of Rome, the navies of Spain, and the armies of France,—alike hostile and dangerous,—England could make but a feeble show of physical forces, and was protected only by her insular position. The public dangers were so imminent that there was needed not only a strong hand but a stout heart and a wise head at the helm. Excessive caution was necessary, perpetual vigilance was imperative; a single imprudent measure might be fatal in such exigencies. And this accounts for the vacillating policy of Elizabeth, so often condemned by historians. It did not proceed from weakness of head, but from real necessity occasioned by constant embarrassments and changing circumstances. According to all the canons of expediency, it was the sign of a sagacious ruler to temporize and promise and deceive in that sad perplexity. Governments, thus far in the history of nations, have been carried on upon different principles from those that bind the conduct of individuals, especially when the weak contend against the strong. This, abstractly, is not to be defended. Governments and individuals alike are bound by the same laws of immutable morality in their general relations; but the rules of war are different from the rules of peace. Governments are expediences to suit peculiar crises and exigencies. A man assaulted by robbers would be a fool to fall

back on the passive virtues of non-resistance.

Elizabeth had to deal both with religious bigots and unscrupulous kings. We may be disgusted with the course she felt it politic to pursue, but it proved successful. A more generous and open course might have precipitated an attack when she was unprepared and defenceless. Her dalliances and expediencies and dissimulations delayed the evil day, until she was ready for the death-struggle; and when the tempest of angry human forces finally broke upon her defenceless head, she was saved only by a storm of wind and rain which Providence kindly and opportunely sent. Had the "Invincible Armada" been permitted to invade England at the beginning of her reign, there would probably have been another Spanish conquest. What chance would the untrained militia of a scattered population, without fortresses or walled cities or military leaders of skill, have had against the veteran soldiers who were marshalled under Philip II., with all the experiences learned in the wars of Charles V. and in the conquest of Peru and Mexico, aided, too, by the forces of France and the terrors of the Vatican and the money of the Flemish manufacturers? It was the dictate of self-preservation which induced Elizabeth to prevaricate, and to deceive the powerful monarchs who were in league against her. If ever lying and cheating were justifiable, they were then; if political jesuitism is ever defensible, it was in the sixteenth century. So that I cannot be hard on the embarrassed Queen for a policy which on the strict principles of morality it would be difficult to defend. It

was a dark age of conspiracies, rebellions, and cabals. In dealing with the complicated relations of government in that day, there were no recognized principles but those of expediency. Even in our own times, expediency rather than right too often seems to guide nations. It is not just and fair, therefore, to expect from a sovereign, in Queen Elizabeth's time, that openness and fairness which are the result only of a higher national civilization. What would be blots on government to-day were not deemed blots in the sixteenth century. Elizabeth must be judged by the standard of her age, not of ours, in her official and public acts.

We must remember, also, that this great Queen was indorsed, supported, and even instructed by the ablest and wisest and most patriotic statesmen that were known to her generation. Lord Burleigh, her prime minister, was a marvel of political insight, industry, and fidelity. If he had not the commanding genius of Thomas Cromwell or the ambitious foresight of Richelieu, he surpassed the statesmen of his day in patriotic zeal and in disinterested labors,—not to extend the boundaries of the empire, but to develop national resources and make the country strong for defence. He was a plodding, wary, cautious, far-seeing, long-headed old statesman, whose opinions it was not safe for Elizabeth to oppose; and although she was arbitrary and opinionated herself, she generally followed Burleigh's counsels,—unwillingly at times, but firmly when she perceived the necessity; for she was, with all her pertinacity, open to conviction of reason. I cannot deny that she sometimes headed off her prime-minister

and deceived him, and otherwise complicated the difficulties that beset her reign; but this was only when she felt a strong personal repugnance to the state measures which he found it imperative to pursue. After all, Elizabeth was a woman, and the woman was not utterly lost in the Queen. It is greatly to her credit, however, that she retained the services of this old statesman for forty years, and that she filled the great offices in the State and Church with men of experience, genius, and wisdom. She made Parker the Archbishop of Canterbury,—a man of remarkable moderation and breadth of mind, whose reforms were carried on without exciting hostilities, and have survived the fanaticisms and hostile attacks of generations. Walsingham, her ambassador at Paris, and afterwards her secretary of state, ferreted out the plots of the Jesuits and the intrigues of hostile courts, and rendered priceless service by his acuteness and diligence. Lord Effingham, one of the Howards, defeated the "Invincible Armada." Sir Thomas Gresham managed her finances so ably that she was never without money. Coke was her attorney. Sir Nicholas Bacon—the ablest lawyer in the realm, and a stanch Protestant—was her lord-keeper; while his illustrious son, the immortal Francis Bacon, though not adequately rewarded, was always consulted by the Queen in great legal difficulties. I say nothing of those elegant and gallant men who were the ornaments of her court, and in some instances the generals of her armies and admirals of her navies,—Sackville, Raleigh, Sidney, not to mention Essex and Leicester, all of whom were distinguished for talents and

services; men who had no equals in their respective provinces; so gifted that it is difficult to determine whether the greatness of her reign was more owing to the talents of the ministers or to the wisdom of the Queen herself. Unless she had been a great woman, I doubt whether she would have discerned the merits of these men, and employed them in her service and kept them so long in office.

It was by these great men that Elizabeth was ruled,—so far as she was ruled at all,—not by favorites, like her successors, James and Charles. The favorites at the court of Elizabeth were rarely trusted with great powers unless they were men of signal abilities, and regarded as such by the nation itself. While she lavished favors upon them,—sometimes to the disgust of the old nobility,—she was never ruled by them, as James was by Buckingham, and Louis XV. by Madame de Pompadour. Elizabeth was not above coquetry, it is true; but after toying with Leicester and Raleigh,—never, though, to the serious injury of her reputation as a woman,—she would retire to the cabinet of her ministers and yield to the sage suggestions of Burleigh and Walsingham. At her council-board she was an entirely different woman from what she was among her courtiers: *there* she would tolerate no flattery, and was controlled only by reason and good sense,—as practical as Burleigh himself, and as hard-working and business-like; cold, intellectual, and clear-headed, utterly without enthusiasm.

Perhaps the greatest service which Elizabeth rendered to the English nation and the cause of civilization was her success in

establishing Protestantism as the religion of the land, against so many threatening obstacles. In this she was aided and directed by some of the most enlightened divines that England ever had. The liturgy of Cranmer was re-established, preferments were conferred on married priests, the learned and pious were raised to honor, eminent scholars and theologians were invited to England, the Bible was revised and freely circulated, and an alliance was formed between learning and religion by the great men who adorned the universities. Though inclined to ritualism, Elizabeth was broad and even moderate in reform, desiring, according to the testimony of Bacon, that all extremes of idolatry and superstition should be avoided on the one hand, and levity and contempt on the other; that all Church matters should be examined without sophistical niceties or subtle speculations.

The basis of the English Church as thus established by Elizabeth was half-way between Rome and Geneva,—a compromise, I admit; but all established institutions and governments accepted by the people are based on compromise. How can there be even family government without some compromise, inasmuch as husband and wife cannot always be expected to think exactly alike?

At any rate, the Church established by Elizabeth was signally adapted to the wants and genius of the English people,—evangelical, on the whole, in its creed, though not Calvinistic; unobtrusive in its forms, easy in its discipline, and aristocratic in its government; subservient to bishops, but really governed by

the enlightened few who really govern all churches, Independent, Presbyterian, or Methodist; supported by the State, yet wielding only spiritual authority; giving its influence to uphold the crown and the established institutions of the country; conservative, yet earnestly Protestant. In the sixteenth century it was the Church of reform, of progress, of advancing and liberalizing thought. Elizabeth herself was a zealous Protestant, protecting the cause whenever it was persecuted, encouraging Huguenots, and not disdaining the Presbyterians of Scotland. She was not as generous to the Protestants of Holland and France as we could have wished, for she was obliged to husband her resources, and hence she often seemed parsimonious; but she was the acknowledged head of the reform movement in Europe. Her hostility to Rome and Roman influence was inexorable. She may not have carried reforms as far as the Puritans desired, and who can wonder at that? Their spirit was aggressive, revolutionary, bitter, and, pushed to its logical sequences, was hostility to the throne itself, as proved by their whole subsequent history until Cromwell was dead. And this hostility Burleigh perceived as well as the Queen, which, doubtless led to severities that our age cannot pretend to justify.

The Queen did dislike and persecute the Puritans, not, I think, so much because they made war on the surplice, liturgy, and divine right of bishops, as because they were at heart opposed to all absolute authority both in State and Church, and when goaded by persecution would hurl even kings from

their thrones. It is to be regretted that Elizabeth was so severe on those who differed from her; she had no right to insist on uniformity with her conscience in those matters which are above any human authority. The Reformation in its severest logical consequences, in its grandest deductions, affirms the right of private judgment as the mighty pillar of its support. All parties, Presbyterian as well as Episcopalian, sought uniformity; they only differed as to its standard. With the Queen and ministers and prelates it was the laws of the land; with the Puritans, the decrees of provincial and national synods. Hence, if Elizabeth insisted that her subjects should conform to her notions and the ordinances of Parliament and convocations, she showed a spirit which was universal. She was superior even in toleration to all contemporaneous sovereigns, Catholic or Protestant, man or woman. Contrast her persecutions of Catholics and Puritans with the persecution by Catherine de Médicis and Charles IX. and Philip II. and Ferdinand II.; or even with that under the Regent Murray of Scotland, when churches and abbeys were ruthlessly destroyed. Contrast her Archbishop of Canterbury with the religious dictator of Scotland. She kindled no *auto-da-fé*, like the Spaniards; she incited no wholesale massacre, like the demented fury of France; she had a loving care of her subjects that no religious bigotry could suppress. She did not seek to exterminate Catholics or Puritans, but simply to build up the Church of England as the shield and defence and enlargement of Protestantism in times of unmitigated religious ferocity,—a



Protestantism that has proved the bulwark of European liberties, as it was the foundation of all progress in England. In giving an impulse to this great emancipating movement, even if she did not push it to its remote logical end, Elizabeth was a benefactor of her country and of mankind, and is not unjustly called a nursing-mother of the Church,—being so regarded by Protestants, not in England merely, but on the Continent of Europe. When was ever a religious revolution effected, or a national church established, with so little bloodshed? When have ever such great changes proved so popular and so beneficial, and, I may add, so permanent? After all the revolutions in English thought and life for three hundred years, the Church as established by Elizabeth is still dear to the great body of English people, and has survived every agitation. And even many things which the Puritans sought to sweep away—the music of the choir, organs, and chants, even the holidays of venerated ages—are now revived by the descendants of the Puritans with ancient ardor; showing how permanent are such festivals as Christmas and Easter in the heart of Christendom, and how hopeless it is to eradicate what the Church and Christianity, from their earliest ages, have sanctioned and commended.

The next great service which Elizabeth rendered to England was a development of its resources,—ever a primal effort with wise statesmen, with such administrators as Sully, Colbert, Richelieu. The policy of her Government was not the policy of aggrandizement in war, which has ever provoked jealousies

and hatreds in other nations, and led to dangerous combinations, and sowed the seed of future wars. The policy of Napoleon was retaliated in the conquests of Prussia in our day; and the policy of Prussia may yet lead to its future dismemberment, in spite of the imperial realm shaped by Bismarck. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again,"—an eternal law, binding both individuals and nations, from which there is no escape. The government of Elizabeth did not desire or aim at foreign conquests,—the great error of European statesmen on the Continent; it sought the establishment of the monarchy at home, and the development of the various industries of the nation, since in these industries are both power and wealth. Commerce was encouraged, and she girt her island around with those "wooden walls" which have proved England's impregnable defence against every subsequent combination of tyrants and conquerors. The East India Company was formed, and the fisheries of Newfoundland established. It was under Elizabeth's auspices that Frobisher penetrated to the Polar Sea, that Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe, that Sir Walter Raleigh colonized Virginia, and that Sir Humphrey Gilbert attempted to discover 'a northwestern passage to India. Manufactories were set up for serges, so that wool was no longer exported, but the raw material was consumed at home. A colony of Flemish weavers was planted in the heart of England. The prosperity of dyers and cloth-dressers and weavers dates from this reign, although some attempts at manufactures were made in the reign

of Edward III. A refuge was given to persecuted foreigners, and work was found for them to do. Pasture-land was converted to tillage,—not, as is now the case, to parks for the wealthy classes. Labor was made respectable, and enterprise of all kinds was stimulated. Wealth was sought in industry and economy, rather than in mines of gold and silver; so that wealth was doubled during this reign, and the population increased from four millions to six millions. All the old debts of the Crown were paid, both principal and interest, and the debased coin was called in at a great sacrifice to the royal revenue. The arbitrary management of commerce by foreign merchants was broken up, and weights and measures were duly regulated. The Queen did not revoke monopolies, it is true; the principles of political economy were not then sufficiently understood. But even monopolies, which disgraced the old Roman world, and are a disgrace to any age, were not so gigantic and demoralizing in those times as in our own, under our free institutions; they were not used to corrupt legislation and bribe judges and prevent justice, but simply to enrich politicians and favorites, and as a reward for distinguished services.

Justice in the courts was impartially administered; there was security to property and punishment for crime. No great culprits escaped conviction; nor, when convicted, were they allowed to purchase, with their stolen wealth, the immunities of freedom. The laws were not a mockery, as in republican Borne, where demagogues had the ascendancy, and prepared the way for

usurpation and tyranny. All the expenses of the government were managed economically,—so much so that the Queen herself received from Parliament, for forty years, only an average grant of £65,000 a year. She disliked to ask money from the Commons, and they granted subsidies with extreme reluctance; the result was that between the two the greatest economy was practised, and the people were not over-burdened by taxation.

Elizabeth hated and detested war as the source of all calamities, and never embarked upon it except under compulsion. All her wars were virtually defensive, to maintain the honor, safety, and dignity of the nation. She did not even seek to recover Calais, which the French had held for three hundred years; although she took Havre, to gain a temporary foothold for her troops. She did not strive for military *éclat* or foreign possessions in Europe, feeling that the strength of England, like the ancient Jewish commonwealth, was in the cultivation of the peaceful virtues; and yet she made war when it became imperative. She gave free audience to her subjects, paid attention to all petitions, and was indefatigable in business. She made her own glory identical with the prosperity of the realm; and if she did not rule *by* the people, she ruled *for* the people, as enlightened and patriotic monarchs ever have ruled. It is indisputable that the whole nation loved her and honored her to the last, even when disappointments had saddened her and the intoxicating delusions of life had been dispelled. She bestowed honors and benefits with frankness and cordiality. She ever sought to base

her authority on the affections of the people,—the only support even of absolute thrones. She was ever ready with a witticism, a smile, and a pleasant word. Though she gave vent to peevishness and irritability when crossed, and even would swear before her ministers and courtiers in private, yet in public she disguised her resentments, and always appeared dignified and graceful; so that the people, when they saw her majestic manners, or heard her loving speeches, or beheld her mounted at the head of armies or shining unrivalled in grand festivals, or listened to her learning on public occasions,—such as when she extemporized Latin orations at Oxford,—were filled with pride and admiration, and were ready to expose their lives in her service.

The characteristic excellence of Elizabeth's reign, as it seems to me, was good government. She had extraordinary executive ability, directed to all matters of public interest. Her government was not marked by great and brilliant achievements, but by perpetual vigilance, humanity, economy, and liberal policy. There were no destructive and wasting wars, no passion for military glory, no successions of court follies, no extravagance in palace-building, no egotistical aims and pleasures such as marked the reign of Louis XIV., which cut the sinews of national strength, impoverished the nobility, disheartened the people, and sowed the seeds of future revolution. That modern Nebuchadnezzar spent on one palace £40,000,000; while Elizabeth spent on all her palaces, processions, journeys, carriages, servants, and dresses £65,000 a year. She was indeed

fond of visiting her subjects, and perhaps subjected her nobles to a burdensome hospitality. But the Earl of Leicester could well afford three hundred and sixty-five hogsheads of beer when he entertained the Queen at Kenilworth, since he was rich enough to fortify his castle with ten thousand men; nor was it difficult for the Earl of Derby to feast the royal party, when his domestic servants numbered two hundred and forty. She may have exacted presents on her birthday; but the courtiers who gave her laces and ruffs and jewelry received monopolies in return.

The most common charge against Elizabeth as a sovereign is, that she was arbitrary and tyrannical; nor can she be wholly exculpated from this charge. Her reign was despotic, so far as the Constitution would allow; but it was a despotism according to the laws. Under her reign the people had as much liberty as at any preceding period of English history. She did not encroach on the Constitution. The Constitution and the precedents of the past gave her the Star Chamber, and the High Commission Court, and the disposal of monopolies, and the absolute command of the military and naval forces; but these great prerogatives she did not abuse. In her direst necessities she never went beyond the laws, and seldom beyond the wishes of the people.

It is expecting too much of sovereigns to abdicate their own powers except upon compulsion; and still more, to increase the political power of the people. The most illustrious sovereigns have never parted willingly with their own prerogatives. Did the Antonines, or Theodosius, or Charlemagne, or 'Frederic II.?

The Emperor of Russia may emancipate serfs from a dictate of humanity, but he did not give them political power, for fear that it might be turned against the throne. The sovereign people of America may give political equality to their old slaves, and invite them to share in the legislation of great interests: it is in accordance with that theory of abstract rights which Rousseau, the creator of the French Revolution, propounded,—which gospel of rights was accepted by Jefferson and Franklin, The monarchs of the world have their own opinions about the political rights of those whom they deem ignorant or inexperienced. Instead of proceeding to enlarge the bounds of popular liberties, they prefer to fall back on established duties. Elizabeth had this preference; but she did not attempt to take away what liberties the people already had. In encouraging the principles of the Reformation, she became their protector against Catholic priests and feudal nobles.

It is not quite just to stigmatize the government of Elizabeth as a despotism, A despotism is a régime supported by military force, based on an army, with power to tax the people without their consent,—like the old rule of the Caesars, like that of Louis XIV. and Peter the Great, and even of Napoleon. Now, Elizabeth never had a standing army of any size. When the country was threatened by Spain, she threw herself into the arms of the militia,—upon the patriotism and generosity of her people. Nor could she tax the people without the consent of Parliament,—which by a fiction was supposed to represent the people, while

in reality it only represented the wealthy classes. Parliament possessed the power to cripple her, and was far less generous to her than it was to Queen Victoria. She was headed off both by the nobles and by the representatives of the wealthy, powerful, and aristocratic Commons. She had great prerogatives and great private wealth, palaces, parks, and arbitrary courts; but she could not go against the laws of the realm without endangering her throne,—which she was wise enough and strong enough to keep, in spite of all her enemies both at home and abroad. Had she been a man, she might have turned out a tyrant and a usurper: she might have increased the royal prerogatives, like Richelieu; she might have made wars, like Louis XIV.; she might have ground down the people, like her successor James. But she understood the limits of her power, and did not seek to go beyond: thereby proving herself as wise as she was mighty.

By most historical writers Elizabeth is severely censured for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, and I think with justice. I am not making a special plea in favor of Elizabeth,—hiding her defects and exaggerating her virtues,—but simply seeking to present her character and deeds according to the verdict of enlightened ages. It was a cruel and repulsive act to take away the life of a relative and a woman and a queen, under any pretence whatever, unless the sparing of her life would endanger the security of the sovereign and the peace of the realm. Mary was the granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII, and was the lawful successor of Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry



VIII. On the principle of legitimacy, she had a title to the throne superior to Elizabeth herself, and the succession of princes has ever been determined by this. But Mary was a Catholic, to say nothing of her levities or crimes, and had been excluded by the nation for that very reason. If there was injustice done to her, it was in not allowing her claim to succeed Mary. That she felt that Elizabeth was a usurper, and that the English throne belonged by right to her, I do not doubt. It was natural that she should seek to regain her rights. If she should survive Elizabeth, her claims as the rightful successor could not be well set aside. That in view of these facts Elizabeth was jealous of Mary I do not doubt; and that this jealousy was one great cause of her hostility is probable.

The execution of Mary Stuart because she was a Catholic, or because she excited fear or jealousy, is utterly indefensible. All that the English nation had a right to do was to set her succession aside because she was a Catholic, and would undo the work of the Reformation. She had a right to her religion; and the nation also had a right to prevent its religion from being overturned or jeopardized. I do not believe, however, that Mary's life endangered either the throne or the religion of England, so long as she was merely Queen of Scotland; hence I look upon her captivity as cruel, and her death as a crime. She was destroyed as the male children of the Hebrews were destroyed by Pharaoh, as a sultan murders his nephews,—from fear; from a cold and cruel state policy, against all the higher laws of morality.

The crime of Elizabeth doubtless has palliations. She was

urged by her ministers and by the Protestant part of the nation to commit this great wrong, on the plea of necessity, to secure the throne against a Catholic successor, and the nation from embarrassments, plots, and rebellions. It is an undoubted fact that Mary, even after her imprisonment in England, was engaged in perpetual intrigues; that she was leagued with Jesuits and hostile powers, and kept Elizabeth in continual irritation and the nation in constant alarm. And it is probable that had she succeeded Elizabeth, she would have destroyed all that was dear to the English heart,—that glorious Reformation, effected by so many labors and sacrifices. Therefore she was immolated to the spirit of the times, for reasons of expediency and apparent state necessity. That she conspired against the government of Elizabeth, and possibly against her life, was generally supposed; that she was a bitter enemy cannot be questioned. How far Elizabeth can be exculpated on the principle of self-defence cannot well be ascertained. Scotch historians do not generally accept the reputed facts of Mary's guilt. But if she sought the life of Elizabeth, and was likely to attain so bloody an end,—as was generally feared,—then Elizabeth has great excuses for having sanctioned the death of her rival.

So the beautiful and interesting Mary dies a martyr to her cause,—a victim of royal and national jealousy, paying the penalty for alleged crimes against the state and throne. Had Elizabeth herself, during the life of her sister Mary, been guilty of half they proved against the Queen of Scots, she would have been most

summarily executed. But Elizabeth was wise and prudent, and waited for her time. Mary Stuart was imprudent and rash. Her character, in spite of her fascinations and accomplishments, was full of follies, infidelities, and duplicities. She is supposed to have been an adulteress and a murderess. She was unfortunate in her administration of Scotland. She was ruled by wicked favorites and foreign influence. She was not patriotic, or lofty, or earnest. She did what she could to root out Protestantism in Scotland, and kept her own realm in constant trouble. She had winning manners and graceful accomplishments; she was doubtless an intellectual woman; she had courage, presence of mind, tact, intelligence; she could ride and dance well: but with these accomplishments she had qualities which made her dangerous and odious. If she had not been executed, she would have been execrated. But her sufferings and unfortunate death appeal to the heart of the world, and I would not fight against popular affections and sympathies. Though she committed great crimes and follies, and was supposed to be dangerous to the religion and liberties of England, she died a martyr,—as Charles I. died, and Louis XVI.,—the victim of great necessities and great animosities.

The execution of Essex is another of the popular rather than serious charges against Elizabeth. He had been her favorite; he was a generous, gifted, and accomplished man,—therefore, it is argued, he ought to have been spared. But he was caught with arms in his hands. He was a traitor to the throne which enriched him and the nation which flattered him. He was at

the head of foolish rebellion, and therefore he died,—died like Montmorency in the reign of Henry IV., like Bassompierre, like Norfolk and Northumberland, because he had committed high-treason and defied the laws. Why should Elizabeth spare such a culprit? No former friendship, no chivalrous qualities, no array of past services, ever can offset the crime of treason and rebellion, especially in unsettled times; and Elizabeth would have been worse than weak had she spared so great a criminal, both according to the laws and precedents of England and the verdict of enlightened civilization. We may compassionate the fate of Essex; but he was rash, giddy, and irritated, and we feel that he deserved his punishment.

The other charges brought against Elizabeth pertain to her as a woman rather than a sovereign. They say that she was artful, dissembling, parsimonious, jealous, haughty, and masculine. Very likely,—and what then? Who claimed that she was perfect, any more than other great sovereigns whom on the whole we praise? These faults, too, may have been the result of her circumstances, rather than native traits of character. Surrounded with spies and enemies, she was obliged to hide her thoughts and her plans. Irritated by treason and rebellions, she may have given vent to unseemly anger. Flattered beyond all example, she may have been vain and ostentatious. Possessed of great powers, she may have been arbitrary. Crippled by Parliament, she may have nursed her resources. Compelled to give to everything, she may have been parsimonious. Slandered by her enemies, she may have

been resentful. Annoyed by wrangling sects, she may have too strenuously paraded her high-church principles.

But all these things we lose sight of in the undoubted virtues, abilities, and services of this great Queen. Historians have other work than to pick out spots on the sun. The dark spot, if there is one upon Elizabeth's character, was her coquetry in private life. It is impossible to tell whether or not she exceeded the bounds of womanly virtue. She was probably slandered and vilified by treacherous, gossiping ambassadors, who were foes to her person and her kingdom, and who made as ugly reports of her as possible to their royal masters. I am sorry that these malicious accusations have been raked out of the ashes of the past by modern historians, whose literary fame rests on bringing to light what is *new* rather than what is *true*. The character of a woman and a queen so admired and honored in her day, should be sacred from the stings of sensational writers who poison their darts from the archives of bitter foreign enemies.

The gallant men of genius whom Elizabeth admired and honored—as a bright and intellectual woman naturally would, especially when deprived of the felicities of wedded life—never presumed, I have charity to believe, beyond an undignified partiality and an admiring friendship. When Essex stood highest in her favor, she was nearly seventy years of age. There are no undoubted facts which criminate her,—nothing but gossip and the malice of foreign spies. What a contrast her private life was to that of her mother Anne Boleyn, or to that of Mary, Queen

of Scots, or even to that of the great Catherine of Russia! She had, indeed, great foibles and weaknesses. She was inordinately fond of dress; she was sensitive to her own good looks; she was jealous of pretty women; she was vain, and susceptible to flattery; she was irritable when crossed; she gave way to sallies of petulance and anger; she occasionally used language unbecoming her station and authority; she could dissimulate and hide her thoughts: but her nature was not hypocritical, or false, or mean. She was just, honest, and straightforward in her ordinary dealings; she was patriotic, enlightened, and magnanimous; she loved learning and learned men; she had at heart the best interests of her subjects; she was true to her cause. Surely these great virtues, which it is universally admitted she possessed, should more than balance her defects and weaknesses. See how tender-hearted she was when required to sign death-warrants, and what grief she manifested when Essex proved unworthy of her friendship! See her love of children, her readiness of sympathy, her fondness for society,—all feminine qualities in a woman who is stigmatized as masculine, as she perhaps was in her mental structure, in her habits of command, and aptitude for business: a strong-minded woman at the worst, yet such a woman as was needed on a throne, especially in stormy times and in a rude state of society.

And when we pass from her private character to her public services, by which the great are judged, how exalted her claims to the world's regard! Where do we find a greater or a better

queen? Contrast her with other female sovereigns,—with Isabella, who with all her virtues favored the Inquisition; with her sister Mary, who kindled the fires of Smithfield; with Catherine de Médicis, who sounded the tocsin of St. Bartholomew; with Mary of Scotland, who was a partner in the murder of her husband; with Anne of Austria, who ruled through Italian favorites; with Christiana of Sweden, who scandalized Europe by her indecent eccentricities; with Anne of Great Britain, ruled by the Duchess of Marlborough. There are only two great sovereigns with whom she can be compared,—Catherine II. of Russia, and Maria Theresa of Germany, illustrious, like Elizabeth, for courage and ability. But Catherine was the slave of infamous passions, and Maria Theresa was a party to the partition of Poland. Compared with these even, the English queen appears immeasurably superior; they may have wielded more power, but their moral influence was less. It is not the greatness of a country which gives greatness to its exalted characters. Washington ruled our empire in its infancy; and Buchanan, with all its majestic resources,—yet who is dearest to the heart of the world? No countries ever produced greater benefactors than Palestine and Greece, when their limits were scarcely equal to one of our States. The fame of Burleigh burns brighter than that of the most powerful of modern statesmen. The names of Alexander Hamilton and Daniel Webster may outshine the glories of any statesmen who shall arise in this great country for a hundred years to come. Elizabeth ruled a little island; but her memory and deeds

are as immortal as the fame of Pericles or Marcus Aurelius.

And the fame of England's great queen rests on the influence which radiated from her character, as well as upon the power she wielded with so much wisdom and ability. Influence is greater than power in the lapse of ages. Politicians may wield power for a time; but the great statesmen, like Burke and Canning, live in their ideas. Warriors and kings, and ministers of kings, have power; but poets and philosophers have influence, for their ideas go coursing round the world until they have changed governments and institutions for better or for worse,—like those of Paul, of Socrates, of Augustine, of Dante, of Shakspeare, of Bacon, yea, of Rousseau. Some few favored rulers and leaders of men have had both power and influence, like Moses, Alfred, and Washington; and Elizabeth belongs to this class. Her influence was for good, and it permeated English life and society, like that of Victoria, whose power was small.

As a queen, however, more than a woman, Elizabeth is one of the great names of history. I have some respect for the critical verdict of Francis Bacon, the greatest man of his age,—if we except Shakspeare,—and one of the greatest men in the history of all nations. What does he say? He knew her well, perhaps as well as any modern historian. He says:—

"She was a princess, that, if Plutarch were now alive to write by parables, it would puzzle him to find her equal among women. She was endowed with learning most singular and rare; and as for her government, I do affirm that England never had forty-



five years of better times, and this, not through the calmness of the season, but the wisdom of her regimes. When we consider the establishment of religion, and the constant peace of the country, the good administration of justice, the flourishing state of learning, the increase of wealth, and the general prosperity, amid differences in religion, the troubles of neighboring nations, the ambition of Spain, and the opposition of Home, I could not have chosen a more remarkable combination of learning in the prince with felicity of the people."

I can add nothing to this comprehensive verdict: it covers the whole ground. So that for virtues and abilities, in spite of all defects, I challenge attention to this virgin queen. I love to dwell on her courage, her fortitude, her prudence, her wisdom, her patriotism, her magnanimity, her executive ability, and, more, on the exalted services she rendered to her country and to civilization. These invest her name with a halo of glory which shall blaze through all the ages, even as the great men who surrounded her throne have made her name illustrious.

The Elizabethan era is justly regarded as the brightest in English history; not for the number of its great men, or the magnificence of its great enterprises, or the triumphs of its great discoveries and inventions, but because there were then born the great ideas which constitute the strength and beauty of our proud civilization, and because then the grandest questions which pertain to religion, government, literature, and social life were first agitated, with the freshness and earnestness of a

revolutionary age. The men of that period were a constellation of original thinkers. We still point with admiration to the political wisdom of Cecil, to the sagacity of Walsingham, to the varied accomplishments of Raleigh, to the chivalrous graces of Sidney, to the bravery of Hawkins and Nottingham, to the bold enterprises of Drake and Frobisher, to the mercantile integrity and financial skill of Gresham, to the comprehensive intellect of Parker, to the scholarship of Ascham, to the eloquence of Jewel, to the profundity of Hooker, to the vast attainments and original genius of Bacon, to the rich fancy of Spenser, to the almost inspired insight of Shakspeare, towering above all the poets of ancient and of modern times, as fresh to-day as he was three hundred years ago, the greatest miracle of intellect that perhaps has ever adorned the world. By all these illustrious men Queen Elizabeth was honored and beloved. All received no small share of their renown from her glorious appreciation; all were proud to revolve around her as a central sun, giving life and growth to every great enterprise in her day, and shedding a light which shall gladden unborn generations.

It is something that a woman has earned such a fame, and in a sphere which has been supposed to belong to man alone. And if men shall here and there be found to decry her greatness, let no woman be found who shall seek to dethrone her from her lofty pedestal; for in so doing she unwittingly becomes a detractor from that womanly greatness in which we should all rejoice, and which thus far has so seldom been seen in exalted stations. For

my part, the more I study history the more I reverence this great sovereign; and I am proud that such a woman has lived and reigned and died in honor.

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# HENRY OF NAVARRE

**A. D. 1553-1610**

## THE HUGUENOTS

In this lecture I shall confine myself principally to the connection of Henry IV. with that memorable movement which came near making France a Protestant country. He is identified with the Huguenots, and it is the struggles of the Huguenots which I wish chiefly to present. I know he was also a great king, the first of the Bourbon dynasty, whose heroism in war was equalled only by his enlightened zeal in the civilization of France,—a king who more deeply impressed himself upon the affections of the nation than any monarch since Saint Louis, and who, had he lived to execute his schemes, would have raised France to the highest pitch of glory. Nor do I forget, that, although he fought for a great cause, and reigned with great wisdom and ability, and thus rendered important services to his country, he was a man of great defects of character, stained with those peculiar vices which disgraced most of the Bourbon kings, especially Louis XIV. and Louis XV.; that his court was the

scene of female gallantries and intrigues, and that he was more under the influence of women than was good for the welfare of his country or his own reputation. But the limits of this lecture will not permit me to dwell on his acts as a monarch, or on his statesmanship, his services, or his personal defects of character. I am obliged, from the magnitude of my subject, and from the necessity of giving it unity and interest, to confine myself to him as a leader of the Huguenots alone. It is not Henry himself that I would consider, so much as the struggles of the brave men associated with him, more or less intimately, in their attempt to secure religious liberty in the sixteenth century.

The sixteenth century! What a great era that was In comparison with the preceding centuries since Christianity was declared! From a religious and heroic point of view it was immeasurably a greater period than the nineteenth century, which has been marked chiefly for the triumphs of science, material progress, and social and political reforms. But in earnestness, in moral grandeur, and in discussions which pertain to the health and life of nations, the sixteenth century was greater than our own. Then began all sorts of inquiries about Nature and about mind, about revelation and Providence, about liberty of worship and freedom of thought; all of which were discussed with an enthusiasm and patience and boldness and originality to which our own times furnish no parallel. And united with this fresh and original agitation of great ideas was a heroism in action which no age of the world has equalled. Men risked their

fortunes and their lives in defence of those principles which have made the enjoyment of them in our times the greatest blessing we possess. It was a new spirit that had arisen in our world to break the fetters which centuries of fraud and superstition and injustice had forged,—a spirit scornful of old authorities, yet not sceptical, with disgust of the past and hope for the future, penetrating even the hamlets of the poor, and kindling the enthusiasm of princes and nobles, producing learned men in every country of Europe, whose original investigations should put to the blush the commentators and compilers of this age of religious mediocrity and disguised infidelity. Such intellectual giants in the field of religious inquiry had not appeared since the Fathers of the Church combated the paganism of the Roman world, and will not probably appear again until the cycle of changes is completed in the domain of theological thought, and men are forced to meet the enemies of divine revelation marshalled in such overwhelming array that there will be a necessity for reformers, called out by a special Providence to fight battles,—as I regard Luther and Calvin and Knox. The great difference between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, outside of material aspects, is that the former recognized the majesty of God, and the latter the majesty of man. Both centuries believed in progress; but the sixteenth century traced this progress to first, and the nineteenth to second, causes. The sixteenth believed that human improvement was owing directly to special divine grace, and the nineteenth believes in the necessary development of mankind.

The school of the sixteenth century was spiritual, that of the nineteenth is material; the former looked to heaven, the latter looks to earth. The sixteenth regarded this world as a mere preparation for the next, and the nineteenth looks upon this world as the future scene of indefinite and completed bliss. The sixteenth century attacked the ancient, the nineteenth attacks the eternal. The sixteenth destroyed, but reconstructed; the nineteenth also destroys, but would substitute nothing instead. The sixteenth reminds us of audacious youth, still clinging to parental authority; the nineteenth reminds us of cynical and irreverent old age, believing in nothing but the triumphs of science and art, and shaking off the doctrines of the ages as exploded superstitions.

The sixteenth century was marked not only by intensely earnest religious inquiries, but by great civil and social disorders,—showing a transition period of society from the slaveries and discomforts of the feudal ages to the liberty and comforts of highly civilized life. In the midst of religious enthusiasm we see tumults, insurrections, terrible animosities, and cruel intolerance. War was associated with inhuman atrocities, and the acceptance of the reformed faith was followed by bitter and heartless persecution. The feudal system had received a shock from standing armies and the invention of gunpowder and the central authority of kings, but it was not demolished. The nobles still continued to enjoy their social and political distinctions, the peasantry were ground down by unequal



laws, and the nobles were as arrogant and quarrelsome as the people were oppressed by unjust distinctions. They were still followed by their armed retainers, and had almost unlimited jurisdiction in their respective governments. Even the higher clergy gloried in feudal inequalities, and were selected from the noble classes. The people were not powerful enough to make combinations and extort their rights, unless they followed the standards of military chieftains, arrayed perhaps against the crown and against the parliaments. We see no popular, independent political movements; even the people, like all classes above them, were firm and enthusiastic in their religious convictions.

The commanding intellect at that time in Europe was John Calvin (a Frenchman, but a citizen of Geneva), whom we have already seen to be a man of marvellous precocity of genius and astonishing logical powers, combined with the most exhaustive erudition on all theological subjects. His admirers claim a distinct and logical connection between his theology and civil liberty itself. I confess I cannot see this. There was nothing democratic about Calvin. He ruled indeed at Geneva as Savonarola did in Florence, but he did not have as liberal ideas as the Florentine reformer about the political liberties of the people. He made his faith the dearest thing a man could have, to be defended unto death in the face of the most unrelenting persecution. It was the tenacity to defend the reformed doctrines, of which, next to Luther, Calvin was the greatest champion, which kindled

opposition to civil rulers. And it was opposition to civil rulers who proved themselves tyrants which led to the struggle for civil liberty; not democratic ideas of right. These may have been the sequence of agitations and wars, but not their animating cause,—like the ideas of Rousseau on the French revolutionists. The original Puritans were not democratic; the Presbyterians of Scotland were not, even when Cromwell led the armies, but not the people, of England. The Huguenots had no aspirations for civil rights; they only aspired for the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience. There was nothing popular in their notions of government when Henry IV. headed the forces of the Huguenots; he only aimed at the recognition of religious rights. The Huguenots never rallied around popular leaders, but rather under the standards of princes and nobles fighting for the right of worshipping God according to the dictation or ideas of Calvin. They would preserve their schools, their churches, their consistories, and their synods; they would be unmolested in their religious worship.

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