

In the year of our Lord's incarnation 880, which was the thirty-second of king Alfred, the above-named army of pagans left Cirencester, and went among the East Angles, where they divided out the country and began to settle.

The same year the army of pagans, which had wintered at Fulham, left the island of Britain, and sailed over the sea to the eastern part of France, where they remained a year at a place called Ghent.

In the year of our Lord's incarnation 881, which was the thirty-third of king Alfred's life, the aforesaid army went higher up into France; and the French fought against them; and after the battle the pagans obtained horses and became an army of cavalry.

In the year of our Lord's incarnation 882, the thirty-fourth of king Alfred's life, the above-named army steered their ships up into France by a river called the Mese [Meuse] and there wintered one year.

In the same year Alfred, king of the Anglo Saxons, fought a battle by sea against the pagan fleet, of which he captured two ships, having slain all who were on board; and the two commanders of two other ships, with all their crews, distressed by the battle and the wounds which they had received, laid down their arms and submitted to the king.

In the year of our Lord's incarnation 883, which was the thirty-fifth of king Alfred's life, the aforesaid army went up the river called Scald [Scheldt] to a convent of nuns called Cundath [Condé-sur-l'Escaut] and there remained a year.

In the year of our Lord's incarnation 884, which was the thirty-sixth of king Alfred's life, the aforesaid army divided into two parts; one body of them went into East France, and the other coming to Britain entered Kent, where they besieged a city called in Saxon Rochester, and situated on the eastern bank of the river Medway. Before the gate of the town the pagans suddenly erected a strong fortress, but yet they were unable to take the city, because the citizens defended themselves bravely, until king Alfred came up to help them with a large army. Then the pagans abandoned their fortress, and all their horses which they had brought with them out of France, and leaving behind them in the fortress the greater part of their prisoners, on the arrival of the king, fled immediately to their ships, and the Saxons immediately seized on the prisoners and horses left by the pagans; and so the pagans, compelled by stern necessity returned the same summer to France.

In the same year Alfred, king of the Anglo-Saxons, led his fleet, full of fighting men, out of Kent to the country of the East Angles, for the sake of plunder; and, when they had arrived at the mouth of the river Stour, immediately thirteen ships of the pagans met them, prepared for battle; a fierce fight ensued, and all the pagans, after a brave resistance, were slain; all the ships, with all their money, were taken. After this, while the royal fleet were reposing, the pagans,

who lived in the eastern part of England, assembled their ships, met the same royal fleet at sea in the mouth of the same river, and, after a naval battle, the pagans gained the victory.

In the same year, also, Carloman, king of the Western Franks, whilst hunting a wild boar, was miserably killed by a large animal of that species, which inflicted a dreadful wound on him with its tusk. His brother Louis [III], who had also been king of the Franks, died the year before. These two brothers were sons of Louis, king of the Franks, who had died in the year above mentioned, in which the eclipse of the sun took place; and it was he whose daughter Judith was given by her father's wish in marriage to Aethelwulf, king of the West Saxons.

In the same year also a great army of the pagans came from Germany into the country of the ancient Saxons, which is called in Saxon Ealdseaxum*. To oppose them the said Saxons and Frisons joined their forces, and fought bravely twice in that same year. In both those battles the Christians, with the merciful aid of the Lord, obtained the victory.

In the same year also, Charles, king of the Allemani, received, with universal consent, all the territories which lie between the Tyrrhenian Sea and that gulf which runs between the old Saxons and the Gauls, except the kingdom of Armorica, *i.e.* Lesser Britain. This Charles was the son of king Louis, who was brother of Charles, king of the Franks, father of the aforesaid queen Judith; these two brothers were sons of Louis, but Louis was the son of the great, the ancient, and wise Charlemagne, who was the son of Pepin.

In the same year pope Martin, of blessed memory, went the way of all flesh; it was he who, in regard for Alfred, king of the Anglo-Saxons, and at his request, freed the school of the Anglo-Saxons resident at Rome from all tribute and tax. He also sent many gifts on that occasion, among which was no small portion of the holy and venerable cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was suspended, for the general salvation of mankind.

In the same year also the army of pagans, which dwelt among the East Angles, disgracefully broke the peace which they had concluded with king Alfred.

Wherefore, to return to that from which I digressed, that I may not be compelled by my long navigation to abandon the port of rest which I was making for, I propose, as far as my knowledge will enable me, to speak of the life and character and just conduct of my lord Alfred, king of the Anglo-Saxons, after he married the above named respected lady of Mercian race, his wife; and, with God's blessing, I will despatch it succinctly and briefly, as I promised, that I may not offend the delicate minds of my readers by prolixity in relating each new event.

* Or, Old Saxony

His nuptials were honourably celebrated in Mercia, among innumerable multitudes of people of both sexes; and after continual feasts, both by night and by day, he was immediately seized, in presence of all the people, by sudden and overwhelming pain, as yet unknown to all the physicians ; for it was unknown to all who were then present, and even to those who daily see him up to the present time, which, sad to say, is the worst of all, that he should have protracted it so long from the twentieth to the fortieth year of his life, and even more than that through the space of so many years — from what cause so great a malady arose. For many thought that this was occasioned by the favour and fascination of the people who surrounded him; others, by some spite of the devil, who is even jealous of the good; others, from an unusual kind of fever. He had this sort of severe disease from his childhood; but once, divine Providence so ordered it, that when he was on a visit to Cornwall for the sake of hunting, and had turned out of the road to pray in a certain chapel, in which rests the body of Saint Guerir*,* and now also St. Neot rests there — for king Alfred was always from his infancy a frequent visitor of holy places for the sake of prayer and almsgiving — he prostrated himself for private devotion, and, after some time spent therein, he entreated of God's mercy, that in his boundless clemency he would exchange the torments of the malady which then afflicted him for some other lighter disease; but with this condition, that such disease should not show itself outwardly in his body, lest he should be an object of contempt, and less able to benefit mankind; for he had great dread of leprosy or blindness, or any such complaint, as makes men useless or contemptible when it afflicts them. When he had finished his prayers, he proceeded on his journey, and not long after he felt within him that, by the hand of the Almighty, he was healed, according to his request, of his disorder, and that it was entirely eradicated, although he had first had even this complaint in the flower of his youth, by his devout and pious prayers and supplications to Almighty God. For if I may be allowed to speak briefly, but in a somewhat preposterous order, of his zealous piety to God, in the flower of his youth, before he entered the marriage state, he wished to strengthen his mind in the observance of God's commandments, for he perceived that he could with difficulty abstain from gratifying his carnal desires; and, because he feared the anger of God, if he should do anything contrary to his will, he used often to rise in the morning at the cockcrow, and go to pray in the churches and at the relics of the saints. There he prostrated himself on the ground, and prayed that God in his mercy would strengthen his mind still more in his service by some infirmity such as he might bear, but not such as would render him imbecile and contemptible in his worldly duties; and when he had often prayed with much devotion to this effect, after an interval of some time, Providence vouchsafed to afflict him with the above-named disease, which he bore long and painfully for many years, and even despaired of life, until he entirely got rid of it by his prayers; but, sad to say! It was replaced, as we have said, at his marriage by another which incessantly tormented him, night and day, from the twentieth to the forty-fourth year of his life. But if ever, by God's mercy, he was relieved from this infirmity for a single day or night, yet the fear and dread of that dreadful malady never left him, but rendered him almost useless, as he thought, for every duty, whether human or divine.

* St. Guerir's church was at Hamstoke [St. Neot], in Cornwall.

The sons and daughters, which he had by his wife above mentioned were Aethelflaed the eldest, after whom came Edward, then Aethelgifu, then Aethelswitha, and Aethelweard, besides those who died in their infancy, one of whom was Edmund. Aethelflaed, when she arrived at a marriageable age, was united to Aethelred, earl of Mercia; Aethelgifu also was dedicated to God, and submitted to the rules of a monastic life. Aethelweard the youngest, by the divine counsels and the admirable prudence of the king, was consigned to the schools of learning, where, with the children of almost all the nobility of the country, and many also who were not noble, he prospered under the diligent care of his teachers. Books in both languages, namely, Latin and Saxon, were both read in the school. They also learned to write; so that before they were of an age to practice manly arts, namely, hunting and such pursuits as befit noblemen, they became studious and clever in the liberal arts. Edward and Aethelswitha were bred up in the king's court and received great attention from their attendants and nurses; nay, they continue to this day, with the love of all about them, and showing affability, and even gentleness towards all, both natives and foreigners, and in complete subjection to their father; nor, among their other studies which appertain to this life and are fit for noble youths, are they suffered to pass their time idly and unprofitably without learning the liberal arts; for they have carefully learned the Psalms and Saxon books, especially the Saxon poems, and are continually in the habit of making use of books.

In the meantime, the king, during the frequent wars and other trammels of this present life, the invasions of the pagans, and his own daily infirmities of body, continued to carry on the government, and to exercise hunting in all its branches ; to teach his workers in gold and artificers of all kinds, his falconers, hawkers and dogkeepers; to build houses, majestic and good, beyond all the precedents of his' ancestors, by his new mechanical inventions; to recite the Saxon books, and especially to learn by heart the Saxon poems, and to make others learn them; and he alone never desisted from studying, most diligently, to the best of his ability; he attended the mass and other daily services of religion; he was frequent in psalm singing and prayer, at the hours both of the day and the night. He also went to the churches, as we have already said, in the nighttime to pray, secretly, and unknown to his courtiers; he bestowed alms and largesses on both natives and foreigners of all countries; he was affable and pleasant to all, and curiously eager to investigate things unknown. Many Franks, Frisons, Gauls, pagans, Britons, Scots, and Armoricans, noble and ignoble, submitted voluntarily to his dominion; and all of them, according to their nation and deserving, were ruled, loved, honoured, and enriched with money and power. Moreover, the king was in the habit of hearing the divine scriptures read by his own countrymen, or, if by any chance it so happened, in company with foreigners, and he attended to it with sedulity and solicitude. His bishops, too, and all ecclesiastics, his earls and nobles, ministers and friends, were loved by him with wonderful affection, and their sons, who were bred up in the royal household, were no less dear to him than his own; he had them instructed in all kinds of good morals, and among other things, never ceased to teach them letters night and day; but as if he had no consolation in all these

things, and suffered no other annoyance either from within or without, yet he was harassed by daily and nightly affliction, that he complained to God, and to all who were admitted to his familiar love, that Almighty God had made him ignorant of divine wisdom, and of the liberal arts; in this emulating the pious, the wise, and wealthy Solomon, king of the Hebrews, who at first, despising all present glory and riches, asked wisdom of God, and found both, namely, wisdom and worldly glory; as it is written, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." But God, who is always the inspector of the thoughts of the mind within, and the instigator of all good intentions, and a most plentiful aider, that good desires may be formed — for he would not instigate a man to good intentions, unless he also amply supplied that which the man justly and properly wishes to have — instigated the king's mind within; as it is written, "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me." He would avail himself of every opportunity to procure coadjutors in his good designs, to aid him in his strivings after wisdom, that he might attain to what he aimed at; and, like a prudent bird, which rising in summer with the early morning from her beloved nest, steers her rapid flight through the uncertain tracks of ether, and descends on the manifold and varied flowers of grasses, herbs, and shrubs, essaying that which pleases most, that she may bear it to her home, so did he direct his eyes afar, and seek without, that which he had not within, namely, in his own kingdom.

But God at that time, as some consolation to the king's benevolence; yielding to his complaint, sent certain lights to illuminate him, namely, Werferth, bishop of the church of Worcester, a man well versed in divine scripture, who, by the king's command, first turned the books of the Dialogues of pope Gregory and Peter, his disciple, from Latin into Saxon, and sometimes putting sense for sense, interpreted them with clearness and elegance. After him was Plegmund, a Mercian by birth, archbishop of the church of Canterbury, a venerable man, and endowed with wisdom; Aethelstan also, and Werwulf, his priests and chaplains, Mercians by birth, and erudite. These four had been invited out of Mercia by king Alfred, who exalted them with many honours and powers in the kingdom of the West Saxons, besides the privileges which archbishop Plegmund and bishop Werferth enjoyed in Mercia. By their teaching and wisdom, the king's desires increased unceasingly, and were gratified. Night and day, whenever he had leisure, he commanded such men as these to read books to him; for he never suffered himself to be without one of them, wherefore he possessed a knowledge of every book, though of himself he could not yet understand anything of books, for he had not yet learned to read anything.

But the king's commendable avarice could not be gratified even in this; wherefore he sent messengers beyond the sea to Gaul, to procure teachers, and he invited from thence Grimbald*, priest, and monk, a venerable man, and good singer, adorned with every kind of ecclesiastical discipline and good morals, and most learned in holy scripture. He also obtained from thence John†, also priest and monk, a man of most energetic talents, and learned in all kinds of literary

* Grimbald was provost of St. Omer's.

† John had been connected with the monastery of Corbie.

science, and skilled in many other arts. By the teaching of these men the king's mind was much enlarged, and he enriched and honoured them with much influence.

In these times, I also came into Saxony out of the farthest coasts of Western Britain; and when I had proposed to go to him through many intervening provinces, I arrived in the country of the Saxons, who live on the right hand, which in Saxon is called Sussex, under the guidance of some of that nation; and there I first saw him in the royal vill, which is called Dene [East Dean]. He received me with kindness, and among other familiar conversation, he asked me eagerly to devote myself to his service and become his friend, to leave every thing which I possessed on the left, or western bank of the Severn, and he promised he would give more than an equivalent for it in his own dominions. I replied that I could not incautiously and rashly promise such things; for it seemed to me unjust, that I should leave those sacred places in which I had been bred, educated, and crowned, and at last ordained, for the sake of any earthly honour and power, unless by compulsion. Upon this, he said, "If you cannot accede to this, at least, let me have your service in part: spend six months of the year with me here, and the other six in Britain."

To this, I replied, "I could not even promise that easily or hastily without the advice of my friends." At length, however, when I perceived that he was anxious for my services, though I knew not why, I promised him that, if my life was spared, I would return to him after six months, with such a reply as should be agreeable to him as well as advantageous to me and mine. With this answer he was satisfied, and when I had given him a pledge to return at the appointed time, on the fourth day we left him and returned on horseback towards our own country.

After our departure, a violent fever seized me in the city of Winchester, where I lay for twelve months and one week, night and day, without hope of recovery. At the appointed time, therefore, I could not fulfil my promise of visiting him, and he sent messengers to hasten my journey, and to inquire the cause of my delay. As I was unable to ride to him, I sent a second messenger to tell him the cause of my delay, and assure him that, if I recovered from my infirmity, I would fulfil what I had promised. My complaint left me, and by the advice and consent of all my friends, for the benefit of that holy place, and of all who dwelt therein, I did as I had promised to the king, and devoted myself to his service, on the condition that I should remain with him six months in every year, either continuously, if I could spend six months with him at once, or alternately, three months in Britain and three in Saxony. For my friends hoped that they should sustain less tribulation and harm from king Hyfaidd, who often plundered that monastery and the parish of St. David's, and sometimes expelled the prelates, as they expelled archbishop Nobis, my relation, and myself; if in any manner I could secure the notice and friendship of the king.

At that time, and long before, all the countries on the right-hand side of Britain belonged to king Alfred and still belong to him. For instance, king Hyfaidd, with all the inhabitants of the region of Demetia, compelled by the

violence of the six sons of Rotri, had submitted to the dominion of the king. Hywel also, son of Rhys, king of Glywysing, and Brochfael and Fernfael, sons of Meurig, kings of Gwent, compelled by the violence and tyranny of earl Aethelred and of the Mercians, of their own accord sought king Alfred, that they might enjoy his government and protection from him against their enemies. Elisedd, also, son of Tewdwr, king of Brecon, compelled by the force of the same sons of Rotri, of his own accord sought the government of the aforesaid king; and Anarawd, son of Rotri, with his brother, at length abandoning the friendship of the Northumbrians, from which he received no good but harm, came into king Alfred's presence and eagerly sought his friendship. The king received him honourably, received him as his son by confirmation from the bishop's hand, and presented him with many gifts. Thus, he became subject to the king with all his people, on the same condition, that he should be obedient to the king's will in all respects, in the same way as Aethelred with the Mercians.

Nor was it in vain that all these princes gained the friendship of the king. For those who desired to augment their worldly power, obtained power; those who desired money, gained money; and in like way, those who desired his friendship, or both money and friendship, succeeded in getting what they wanted. But all of them gained his love and guardianship and defence from every quarter, even as the king with his men could protect himself.

When therefore I had come into his presence at the royal vill, called Leonaforð, I was honourably received by him, and remained that time with him at his court eight months; during which I read to him whatever books he liked, and such as he had at hand; for this is his most usual custom, both night and day, amid his many other occupations of mind and body, either himself to read books, or to listen whilst others read them. And when I frequently asked his leave to depart, and could in no way obtain it, at length when I had made up my mind by all means to demand it, he called me to him at twilight, on Christmas eve, and gave me two letters, in which was a long list of all the things which were in two monasteries, called in Saxon, Ambresbury [Amesbury] and Banwell; and on that same day he delivered to me those two monasteries with all the things that were in them, and a silken pall of great value, and a load for a strong man, of incense, adding these words, that he did not give me these trifling presents, because he was unwilling hereafter to give me greater; for in the course of time he unexpectedly gave me Exeter, with all the diocese which belonged to him in Saxony* and in Cornwall, besides gifts every day, without number, in every kind of worldly wealth, which it would be too long to enumerate here, lest they should make my reader tired. But let no one suppose that I have mentioned these presents in this place for the sake of glory or flattery, or to obtain greater honour. I call God to witness, that I have not done so; but that I might certify to those who are ignorant, how profuse he is in giving. He then at once gave me permission to ride to those two rich monasteries and afterwards to return to my own country.

* Wessex

In the year of our Lord's incarnation, 886, which was the thirty-eighth since the birth of Alfred, the army so often beforementioned again fled the country, and went into the country of the Western Franks, directing their ships to the river called the Seine, and sailed up it as far as the city of Paris, and there they wintered and measured out their camp. They besieged that city a whole year, as far as the bridge, that they might prevent the inhabitants from making use of it; for the city is situated on a small island in the middle of the river; but by the merciful favour of God, and the brave defence of citizens, the army could not force their way inside the walls.

In the same year, Alfred, king of the Anglo-Saxons, after the burning of cities and the slaying of the people, honourably rebuilt the city of London, and made it again habitable. He gave it into the custody of his son-in-law, Aethelred, earl of Mercia, to which king all the Angles and Saxons, who before had been dispersed everywhere, or were in captivity with the pagans, voluntarily turned and submitted themselves to his dominion.

In the same year there arose a foul and deadly discord at Oxford, between Grimbold, with those learned men whom he had brought with him, and the old scholars whom he had found there, who, on his arrival, refused altogether to embrace the laws, modes, and forms of prelection instituted by the same Grimbold. During three years there had been no great dissension between them, but there was a secret enmity which afterwards broke out with great atrocity, clearer than the light itself. To appease this quarrel, that invincible king Alfred, having been informed of the strife by a messenger from Grimbold, went to Oxford to put an end to the controversy, and endured much trouble in hearing the arguments and complaints which were brought forwards on both sides. The substance of the dispute was this: the old scholars contended, that literature had flourished at Oxford before the coming of Grimbold, although the number of scholars was smaller than in ancient time, because several had been driven away by the cruelty and tyranny of the pagans. They also proved and showed, by the undoubted testimony of ancient annals, that the orders and institutions of that place had been sanctioned by certain pious and learned men, as for instance by Saint Gildas, Melkinus, Nennius, Kentigern, and others, who had all grown old there in literature, and happily administered everything there in peace and concord; and also, that Saint Germanus had come to Oxford, and stopped there half a year, at the time when he went through Britain to preach against the Pelagian heresy; he wonderfully approved of the customs and institutions above-mentioned. The king, with unheard-of humility, listened to both sides carefully, and exhorted them again and again with pious and wholesome admonitions to cherish mutual love and concord. He therefore left them with this decision, that each party should follow their own counsel, and preserve their own institutions. Grimbold, displeased at this, immediately departed to the monastery at Winchester*, which had been recently founded by king Alfred, and ordered a tomb to be carried to Winchester, in which he proposed, after this life, that his bones should be laid in the vault which had

* Hyde Abbey

been made under the chancel of St. Peter's church in Oxford; which church the same Grimbald had built from its foundations, of stone polished with great care.

In the year of our Lord's incarnation 887, which was the thirty-ninth of king Alfred's life, the above mentioned army of the pagans, leaving the city of Paris uninjured, because they could not succeed against it, sailed up the river Seine under the bridge, until they reached the mouth of the river Materne [Marne]; where they left the Seine, and, following for along time the course of the Marne, at length, but not without much labour, they arrived at a place called Chézy, a royal vill, where they wintered one year. In the following year they entered the mouth of the river Ionna [Yonne], not without doing much damage to the country, and there remained one year.

In the same year Charles, king of the Franks, went the way of all flesh; but Arnulf, his brother's son, six weeks before he died, had expelled him from his kingdom. After his death five kings were appointed, and the kingdom was split into five parts; but the principal rank in the kingdom justly and deservedly devolved on Arnulf, save only that he committed an unworthy offence against his uncle. The other four kings promised fidelity and obedience to Arnulf, as was proper; for none of these four kings was hereditary on his father's side in his share of the kingdom, as was Arnulf; therefore, though the five kings were appointed immediately on the death of Charles, yet the empire remained in the hands of Arnulf.

Such, then, was the division of the kingdom; Arnulf received the countries on the east of the river Rhine; Rudolph the inner parts of the kingdom; Odo the western part; Berengar and Wido, Lombardy, and those countries which are in that part of the mountains; but they did not keep these large dominions in peace, for they twice fought a pitched battle, and often mutually ravaged their kingdoms, and drove each other out of their dominions.

In the same year in which that [pagan] army left Paris and went to Chézy, Aethelhelm, earl of Wiltshire, carried to Rome the alms of king Alfred and of the Saxons. In the same year also Alfred, king of the Anglo-Saxons, so often before mentioned, by divine inspiration, began, on one and the same day, to read and to interpret; but that I may explain this more fully to those who are ignorant, I will relate the cause of this long delay in beginning.

On a certain day we were both of us sitting in the king's chamber, talking on all kinds of subjects, as usual, and it happened that I read to him a quotation out of a certain book. He heard it attentively with both his ears, and addressed me with a thoughtful mind, showing me at the same moment a book which he carried in his bosom, wherein the daily courses and psalms, and prayers which he had read in his youth, were written, and he commanded me to write the same quotation in that book. Hearing this, and perceiving his ingenuous benevolence, and devout desire of studying the words of divine wisdom, I gave, though in secret, boundless thanks to Almighty God, who had implanted such a love of wisdom in the king's heart. But I could not find any empty space in that book wherein to write the quotation, for it was already full of various

matters; wherefore I made a little delay, principally that I might stir up the bright intellect of the king to a higher acquaintance with the divine testimonies. Upon his urging me to make haste and write it quickly, I said to him, "Are you willing that I should write that quotation on some leaf apart? For it is not certain" whether we shall not find one or more other such extracts which will please you; and if that should so happen, we shall be glad that we have kept them apart."

"Your plan is good," said he, and I gladly made haste to get ready a sheet, in the beginning of which I wrote what he bade me; and on that same day, I wrote therein, as I had anticipated, no less than three other quotations which pleased him; and from that time we daily talked together, and found out other quotations which pleased him, so that the sheet became full, and deservedly so; according as it is written, "The just man builds upon a moderate foundation, and by degrees passes to greater things". Thus, like a most productive bee, he flew here and there, asking questions, as he went, until he had eagerly and unceasingly collected many various flowers of divine Scriptures, with which he thickly stored the cells of his mind.

Now when that first quotation was copied, he was eager at once to read, and to interpret in Saxon, and then to teach others; even as we read of that happy robber, who recognized his Lord, aye, the Lord of all men, as he was hanging on the blessed cross, and, saluting him with his bodily eyes only, because elsewhere he was all pierced with nails, cried, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" for it was only at the end of his life that he began to learn the rudiments of the Christian faith. But the king, inspired by God, began to study the rudiments of divine Scripture on the sacred solemnity of St. Martin [Nov. 11], and he continued to learn the flowers collected by certain masters, and to reduce them into the form of one book, as he was then able, although mixed one with another, until it became almost as large as a psalter. This book he called his ENCHIRIDION or MANUAL, because he carefully kept it at hand day and night, and found, as he told me, no small consolation therein.

But as has already been written by a certain wise man,

"Of watchful minds are they whose pious care
It is to govern well,"

so must I be watchful, in that I just now drew a kind of comparison or similarity, though in dissimilar manner, between that happy robber and the king; for the cross is hateful to every one, wherever there is suffering. But what can he do, if he cannot save himself or escape thence? Or by what art can he remain there and improve his cause? He must, therefore, whether he will or no, endure with pain and sorrow that which he is suffering.

Now the king was pierced with many nails of tribulation, though placed in the royal seat; for from the twentieth year of his age to the present year, which is his fortieth, he has been constantly afflicted with most severe attacks of an unknown complaint, so that he has not a moment's ease either from suffering

the pain which it causes, or from the gloom which is thrown over him by the apprehension of its coming. Moreover, the constant invasions of foreign nations, by which he was continually harassed by land and sea, without any interval of quiet, were a just cause of disquiet. What shall I say of his repeated expeditions against the pagans, his wars, and incessant occupations of government? Of the daily embassies sent to him by foreign nations, from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the farthest end of Ireland? For we have seen and read letters, accompanied with presents, which were sent to him by Elias the patriarch of Jerusalem. What shall I say of the cities and towns which he restored, and of others which he built, where none had been before? Of the royal halls and chambers, wonderfully erected by his command, with stone and wood? Of the royal villas constructed of stone, removed from their old site, and handsomely rebuilt by the king's command in more fitting places? Besides the disease above mentioned, he was disturbed by the quarrels of his friends, who would voluntarily endure little or no toil, though it was for the common necessity of the kingdom; but he alone, sustained by the divine aid, like a skilful pilot, strove to steer his ship, laden with much wealth, into the safe and much desired harbour of his country, though almost all his crew were tired, and suffered them not to faint or hesitate, though sailing amid the manifold waves and eddies of this present life.

For all his bishops, earls, nobles, favourite ministers, and prefects, who, next to God and the king, had the whole government of the kingdom, as is fitting, continually received from him instruction, respect, exhortation, and command; nay, at last, when they were disobedient, and his long patience was exhausted, he would reprove them severely, and censure at pleasure their vulgar folly and obstinacy; and in this way he directed their attention to the common interests of the kingdom. But, owing to the sluggishness of the people, these admonitions of the king were either not fulfilled, or were begun late at the moment of necessity, and so ended less to the advantage of those who put them in execution; for I will say nothing of the castles which he ordered to be built, but which, being begun late, were never finished, because the hostile troops broke in upon them by land and sea, and, as often happened, the thwarters of the royal ordinances repented when it was too late, and blushed at their non-performance of his commands. I speak of repentance when it is too late, on the testimony of Scripture, whereby numberless persons have had cause for too much sorrow when many insidious evils have been wrought. But though by those means, sad to say, they may be bitterly afflicted and roused to sorrow by the loss of fathers, wives, children, ministers, servant men, servant maids, and furniture and household stuff, what is the use of hateful repentance when their kinsmen are dead, and they cannot aid them, or redeem those who are captive from captivity? For they are not able even to assist those who have escaped, as they have not wherewith to sustain even their own lives. They repented, therefore, when it was too late, and grieved at their incautious neglect of the king's commands, and they praised the royal wisdom with one voice, and tried with all their power to fulfil what they had before refused, namely, concerning the erection of castles, and other things generally useful to the whole kingdom.

Of his fixed purpose of holy meditation, which, in the midst of prosperity and adversity he never neglected, I cannot with advantage now omit to speak. For, whereas he often thought of the necessities of his soul, among the other good deeds to which his thoughts were night and day turned, he ordered that two monasteries should be built, one for monks at Athelney, which is a place surrounded by impassable marshes and rivers, where no one can enter but by boats, or by a bridge laboriously constructed between two other heights; at the western end of which bridge was erected a strong tower, of beautiful work, by command of the aforesaid king; and in this monastery he collected monks of all kinds, from every quarter, and placed them therein. For at first, because he had no one of his own nation, noble and free by birth, who was willing to enter the monastic life, except children, who could neither choose good nor avoid evil in consequence of their tender years, because for many previous years the love of a monastic life had utterly decayed from that nation as well as from many other nations, though many monasteries still remain in that country; yet, as no one directed the rule of that kind of life in a regular way, for what reason I cannot say, either from the invasions of foreigners which took place so frequently both by sea and land, or because that people abounded in riches of every kind, and so looked with contempt on the monastic life. It was for this reason that king Alfred sought to gather monks of different kinds to place in the same monastery.

First, he placed there as abbot, John the priest and monk, an old Saxon by birth, then certain priests and deacons from beyond the sea; of whom, finding that he had not as large a number as he wished, he procured as many as possible of the same Gallic race, some of whom, being children, he ordered to be taught in the same monastery, and at a later period to be admitted to the monastic habit. I have myself seen a young lad of pagan birth who was educated in that monastery, and by no means the hindmost of them all.

There was also a deed done once in that monastery, which I would utterly consign to oblivion, although it is an unworthy deed; for throughout the whole of Scripture the base deeds of the wicked are interspersed among the blessed deeds of the just, as tares and darnel are sown among the wheat: good deeds are recorded that they may be praised and imitated, and that their imitators may be held in all honour; wicked deeds are there related, that they may be censured and avoided, and their imitators be reprov'd with all odium, contempt, and vengeance.

For once upon a time, a certain priest and a deacon, Gauls by birth, and two of the aforesaid monks, by the instigation of the devil, and excited by some secret jealousy, became so embittered in secret against their abbot, the above-mentioned John, that, like Jews, they circumvented and betrayed their master. For whereas he had two servants, whom he had hired out of Gaul, they taught these such wicked practices, that in the night, when all men were enjoying the sweet tranquility of sleep, they should make their way into the church armed, and shutting it behind them as usual, hide themselves therein, and wait for the abbot should enter the church alone. At length, when he should come alone to pray, and, bending his knees, bow before the holy altar, the men should rush on him with hostility, and try to slay him on the spot. They then should drag

his lifeless body out of the church, and throw it down before the house of a certain harlot, as if he had been slain whilst on a visit to her. This was their machination, adding crime to crime, as it is said, "The last error shall be worse than the first."

But the divine mercy, which always delights to aid the innocent, frustrated in great part the wicked design of the wicked men, so that it should not turn out in every respect as they had proposed.

When, therefore, the whole of the evil counsel had been explained by those wicked teachers to their wicked agents, and the night which had been fixed on as most fit was come, the two armed ruffians were placed, with a promise of impunity, to await in the church for the arrival of the abbot. In the middle of the night John, as usual, entered the church to pray, without any one's knowing of it, and knelt before the altar. The two ruffians rushed upon him with drawn swords, and dealt him some severe wounds. But he, being a man of a brave mind, and, as we have heard say, not unacquainted with the art of self-defence, if he had not been a follower of a better calling, no sooner heard the sound of the robbers, before he saw them, than he rose up against them before he was wounded, and, shouting as loud as he could, struggled against them, crying out that they were devils and not men; for he himself knew no better, as he thought that no men would dare to attempt such a deed. He was, however, wounded before any of his people could come to his help. His attendants, roused by the noise, were frightened when they heard the word devils, and both those two who, like Jews, sought to betray their master, and the others who knew nothing of the matter, rushed together to the doors of the church; but before they got there those ruffians escaped, leaving the abbot half dead. The monks raised the old man, in a fainting condition, and carried him home with tears and lamentations; nor did those two deceitful monks shed tears less than the innocent. But God's mercy did not allow so bold a deed to pass unpunished; the ruffians who perpetrated it, and all who urged them to it were taken and put in prison, where, by various tortures, they came, to, a disgraceful end. Let us now return to our narrative.

Another monastery, also, was built by the same king as a residence, for nuns, near the eastern gate of Shaftesbury; and his own daughter, Aethelgifu, was placed in it as abbess. With her many other noble ladies bound by the rules of the monastic life, dwell in that monastery. These two edifices were enriched by the king with much land, as well as personal property.

These things being thus disposed of, the king began, as was his practice, to consider within himself, what more he could do to augment and show forth his piety; what he had begun wisely, and thoughtfully conceived for the public benefit, was adhered to with equally beneficial result; for he had heard it out of the book of the law, that the Lord had promised to restore to him tenfold; and he knew that the Lord had kept his promise, and had actually restored to him tenfold. Encouraged by this example, and wishing to exceed the practices of his predecessors, he vowed humbly and faithfully to, devote to God half his services, both day and night, and also half of all his wealth, such as lawfully

and justly came annually into his possession; and this vow, as far as human discretion can perceive and keep, he skilfully and wisely endeavoured to fulfil. But, that he might, with his usual caution, avoid that which scripture warns us against: "If you offer aright, but do not divide aright, you sin", he considered how he might divide aright that which he had vowed to God; and as Solomon had said, "The heart of: the king is in the hand of God," that is, his counsel he ordered with wise policy, which could come only from above, that his officers should first divide into two parts the revenues of every year.

When this division was made, he assigned the first part to worldly uses, and ordered that one third of it should be paid to his soldiers, and also to his ministers, the nobles who dwelt at court where they discharged divers duties; for so the king's family was arranged at all times into three classes. The king's attendants. were most wisely distributed into three companies, so that the. first company should be on duty at court for one month, night and day, at the end of which they returned to their homes, and were relieved by the second company. At the end of the second month, in the same way, the third company relieved the second, who returned to their homes, where they spent two months, until their services were again wanted. The third company also gave place to the first in the same way, and also spent two months at home. Thus was the threefold division of the companies arranged at all times in the royal household.

To these therefore was paid the first of the three portions aforesaid, to each according to their respective dignities and peculiar services; the second to the operatives, whom he had collected from every nation, and had about him in large numbers, men skilled in every kind of construction; the third portion was assigned to foreigners who came to him out of every nation far and near, whether they asked money of him or not, he cheerfully gave to each with wonderful munificence according to their respective merits, according to what is written: "God loveth a cheerful giver."

But the second part of all his revenues, which came yearly into his possession, and was included in the receipts of the exchequer, as we mentioned a little before, he, with ready devotion, gave to God, ordering his ministers to divide it carefully into four parts, on the condition that the first part should be discreetly bestowed on the poor of every nation who came to him; and on this subject he said that, as far as human discretion could guarantee, the remark of pope St. Gregory should be followed: "Give not much to whom you should give little, nor little to whom much, nor something to whom nothing, nor nothing to whom something." The second of the four portions was given to the two monasteries which he had built, and to those who therein had dedicated themselves to God's service, as we have mentioned above. The third portion was assigned to the school, which he had studiously collected together, consisting of many of the nobility of his own nation. The fourth portion was for the use of all the neighbouring monasteries in all Saxony and Mercia, and also during some years, in turn, to the churches and servants of God dwelling in Britain [Wales], Cornwall, Gaul, Armorica, Northumbria, and sometimes also in Ireland; according to his means, he either distributed to them beforehand, or afterwards, if life and success should not fail him.

When the king had arranged these matters, he remembered that sentence of divine scripture, "Whosoever will give alms, ought to begin from himself," and prudently began to reflect what he could offer to God from the service of his body and mind; for he proposed to consecrate to God no less out of this than he had done of things external to himself. Moreover, he promised, as far as his infirmity and his means would allow, to give up to God the half of his services, bodily and mental, by night and by day, voluntarily, and with all his might; but, inasmuch as he could not equally distinguish the lengths of the hours by night, on account of the darkness, and oft times of the day, on account of the storms and clouds, he began to consider, by what means and without any difficulty, relying on the mercy of God, he might discharge the promised tenor of his vow until his death.

After long reflection on these things, he at length, by a useful and shrewd invention, commanded his chaplains to supply wax in a sufficient quantity, and he caused it to be weighed in such a manner that when there was so much of it in the scales, as would equal the weight of seventy-two pence, he caused the chaplains to make six candles thereof, each of equal length, so that each candle might have twelve divisions marked longitudinally upon it. By this plan, therefore, those six candles burned for twenty-four hours, at night and day, without fail, before the sacred relics of many of God's elect, which always accompanied him wherever he went; but sometimes when they would not continue burning a whole day and night, till the same hour that they were lighted the preceding evening, from the violence of the wind, which blew day and night without intermission through the doors and windows of the churches, the fissures of the divisions, the plankings, or the wall, or the thin canvass of the tents, they then unavoidably burned out and finished their course before the appointed time; the king therefore considered by what means he might shut out the wind, and so by a useful and cunning invention, he ordered a lantern to be beautifully constructed of wood and white ox-horn, which when skilfully planed till it is thin, is no less transparent than a vessel of glass. This lantern, therefore, was wonderfully made of wood and horn, as we before said, and by night a candle was put into it, which shone as brightly without as within, and was not extinguished by the wind; for the opening of the lantern was also closed up, according to the king's command, by a door made of horn.

By this contrivance, then, six candles, lighted in succession, lasted four and twenty hours, neither more nor less, and, when these were extinguished, others were lighted.

When all these things were properly arranged, the king, eager to give up to God the half of his daily service, as he had vowed, and more also, if his ability on the one hand, and his malady on the other, would allow him, showed himself a minute investigator of the truth in all his judgments, and this especially for the sake of the poor, to whose interest, day and night, among other duties of this life, he ever was wonderfully attentive. For in the whole kingdom the poor, besides him, had few or no protectors; for all the powerful and noble of that country had turned their thoughts rather to secular than to heavenly things:

each was more bent on secular matters, to his own profit, than on the public good.

He strove also, in his own judgments, for the benefit of both the noble and the ignoble, who often perversely quarrelled at the meetings of his earls and officers, so that hardly one of them admitted the justice of what had been decided by the earls and prefects, and in consequence of this pertinacious and obstinate dissension, all desired to have the judgment of the king, and both sides sought at once to gratify their desire. But if any one was conscious of injustice on his side in the suit, though by law and agreement he was compelled, however reluctant, to go before the king, yet with his own good will he never would consent to go. For he knew, that in the king's presence no part of his wrong would be hidden; and no wonder, for the king was a most acute investigator in passing sentence, as he was in all other things. He inquired into almost all the judgments which were given in his own absence, throughout all his dominion, whether they were just or unjust. If he perceived there was iniquity in those judgments, he summoned the judges, either through his own agency, or through others of his faithful servants, and asked them mildly, why they had judged so unjustly; whether through ignorance or malevolence; *i.e.* whether for the love or fear of any one, or hatred of others; or also for the desire of money. At length, if the judges acknowledged they had given judgment because they knew no better, he discreetly and moderately reproofed their inexperience and folly in such terms as these: "I wonder truly at your insolence, that, whereas by God's favour and mine, you have occupied the rank and office of the wise, you have neglected the studies and labours of the wise. Either, therefore, at once give up the discharge of the temporal duties which you hold, or endeavour more zealously to study the lessons of wisdom. Such are my commands." At these words the earls and prefects would tremble and endeavour to turn all their thoughts to the study of justice, so that, wonderful to say, almost all his earls, prefects, and officers, though unlearned from their cradles, were sedulously bent upon acquiring learning, choosing rather laboriously to acquire the knowledge of a new discipline than to resign their functions; but if any one of them from old age or slowness of talent was unable to make progress in liberal studies, he commanded his son, if he had one, or one of his kinsmen, or, if there was no other person to be had, his own freedman or servant, whom he had some time before advanced to the office of reading, to recite Saxon books before him night and day, whenever he had any leisure, and they lamented with deep sighs, in their inmost hearts, that in their youth they had never attended to such studies; and they blessed the young men of our days, who happily could be instructed in the liberal arts, whilst they execrated their own lot, that they had not learned these things in their youth, and now, when they are old, though wishing to learn them, they are unable. But this skill of young and old in acquiring letters, we have explained to the knowledge of the aforesaid king.