

snobbery though his opinion and practice in regard to the relation of gentility to ability, and promotion therefor, is responsible for much of the popular dislike of Sampson, and the popularity of Schley. The latter is good natured and modest where the former is stiff, pompous and exacting. As for ability, the unanimity of naval opinion in favor of Sampson is probably trustworthy and capable.

#### Alfred the Great.

Of all the kings of the West Saxons only Alfred the Great's name is well known to this century. A scholar, a statesman and a great general, Alfred is respected by students of his life as one of the great and moving forces in the development of institutions. His life and deeds are hidden by the veil of a thousand years. He ruled a small kingdom not larger than Lancaster county, Nebraska. The legends which have grown around his name and the reverence with which the English people and their descendants look back to him and the size and importance of the British Empire make his place in real history and influence out of proportion to the actual size of the territory which he saved from Danish usurpation. It is only another instance of the fact that a man's reputation and his influence upon his generation and succeeding ones depend not so much upon the size of the kingdom he saved as upon the difficulties and obstacles he conquered. If the independence of the United States had been easy to achieve, if there had been no Valley Forge, no half-naked soldiers making forced marches with bleeding feet, if there had been no cabals against George Washington, if he had had money enough to equip perfectly a magnificent army, if a united and powerful people had placed him at the head of their army, he would not have been called the "Father of his Country." The heroic qualities which enabled him to make a nation out of a few settlers who had made up their minds to remain Englishmen and to pay allegiance only to an English king were only revealed to his countrymen and to reverent generations by the obstacles which he overcame and which only a man of heroic build and a prophet's love and zeal and patriotism could conquer.

Who but scholars know anything about Alfred's predecessors? In reading the story of his most interesting life, a life whose influence has outlasted that of men born a thousand years later to much larger kingdoms, I find that Ina, a kinsman of King Cædwalla, caused the laws of his people to be collected, and it was this compilation that Alfred revised about two hundred years afterward. But in King Ecbert, King Ethelbald, King Ethelwulf, as well as the kings who succeeded Albert, we have only a moderate, easily satisfied interest.

Doctor Pauli in his history of Alfred the Great says: "In the history of the world there is one often-recurring fact, viz, the saviour of a whole kingdom and the repeller of its foreign conquerors has sprung from some remote province left rude by nature, and uncultivated access. From the unimportant mountain-ridge of Asturia, Pelayo, the last offshoot of the Goths, and the wonder accompanied hero of Spain, took the first step towards the expulsion of Moors from the Peninsula. From the eastern borders of Prussia resounded the first call to arms which had for its result the driving of Napoleon's army from Germany. It is a beautiful trait in the character of a valiant nation when after centuries have elapsed it holds in grateful remem-

brance the spot whence its salvation from great danger once proceeded and which must be to it as the cradle of its freedom. And thus to this day when Alfred, his sufferings and his deeds are the themes of conversation, the Englishman points out with pride to the stranger the low lands of Somerset." In the marshes of Somerset Alfred hid for months subsisting on the scanty nuts, berries and succulent roots of that section of England. The wives and children of the little band that remained faithful to him hid themselves in the thickets and sometimes for the crying of the helpless ones for food, Alfred and his band made a foray on the surrounding country.

An outlaw in his own kingdom, Alfred resolved to win it back from the Danes. For this purpose he and his followers built a fortress at Athelney, near Somerset. This island is east of the Parrot at the point where it joins the river Thone and consists of an eminence rising high above the surrounding country. The place is always damp and frequently overflowed by the tide. Owing to its difficulty of access the spot required little labor from human hands to make it impregnable. The choosing of a natural place of vantage is one of the qualities of a great general. Alfred remained here for some time. He made successful skirmishes into his kingdom occupied by the Danes. Every successful assault on the enemy resulted in accessions to his own forces. As soon as he had thus collected an army he assaulted the Danish army at Atheldune, and gained an overwhelming victory, of course. This was followed by the capture of the principal Danish fortress and the capitulation of the Danish King Guthorm, who in a few days renounced his pagan worship of Woden and was baptized into the Christian religion, with Alfred as his godfather and bearing the new name of Athelstan. The convert agreed to take himself, the remainder of his army and his family out of Wessex and become Albert's inoffensive neighbor.

There is nothing harder to regain than a throne once lost. A king whose only retreat is a marsh, whose people are agricultural rather than warlike, whose throne is occupied by a viking whose only profession and pride and reputation is in fighting, a king without an army, without funds, a ragged, hungry king, must have all the qualities of greatness in order to inspire the farmers to fight and to believe in their fugitive leader. All this Alfred accomplished, and laid the foundations of England in that little west Saxon kingdom.

In making new laws for his kingdom Alfred adapted the new to the old. He was not a reckless innovator, but in all cases kept whatever part of the old law the people themselves had not outgrown and discarded. In scholarship he was as modern as the brothers Grimm. The old songs and tales his mother had told him in his childhood he wrote down and preserved. "Alfred was a German, and the influence," says Pauli, "of his descent was strong. Those powerful German songs which the boy had received as a lasting gift from his beloved mother, often rang in his ears. The youth, passionately following the chase, rejoiced in the gigantic images of his traditionary ancestors, of whom poets sung in all lands from the Danube to the Rhine, from the Appenines to his own island; the king in the most troubled hours of his sovereignty strengthened and confirmed his anxious heart by the examples of patient endurance which this poetry revealed to him and caused his own

and his people's children to learn the poetry of their ancestors."

Alfred's was not so much a creative genius as an appreciating and preserving one. He translated and collated and assisted the monks in their efforts to preserve the history and literature of the people. He was without conceit and he desired only to preserve for his people and to translate for their quicker appreciation the most valuable works there tofore concealed from them in Latin. His was a temperament and an inspiration like McKinley's: constructive and able to avail itself of all knowledge and wisdom collected by the men of his time or by the ancients.

#### The Portion of Labor.

Miss Wilkins' serial story now appearing in Harper's Monthly is the most sympathetic and the least one-sided presentation of the side of labor, not against capital but against our system, that I have yet seen. After all Whistler and the rest of the newest artists can say against making a picture too real, their strictures can not lessen the admiration of the artist which can produce such real people with such real griefs. Miss Wilkins' old factory worker, discharged because his fingers are stiffened by middle-age and can no longer move rapidly enough to produce the established percent of profit for the manufacturer, is the most pathetic, the most moving figure in contemporary literature. Honest, industrious, sober and devoted to his family, of average capacity and of unusual faithfulness, still the man loses his job and can get no other because he is too near the border of that time where the grasshopper is a burden. This spectacle of the man who is not old but who has lost the facility and elasticity of youth without firmly establishing himself in some business where the prevailing preference for youth is ineffectual, is a frequent and saddening spectacle. If employers only knew it the elder man is more likely to be valuable than the younger one. True the former is not so quickly responsive to new situations, but he has had large experience of the various combinations which produce difficulties, and he is not so likely to make irreparable mistakes as the younger man. Perhaps not over clever or self-confident, he has laid by in the course of forty years' generalizations of established value. Such a man is like an old country doctor of originally slight acumen. Modestly and conscientiously keeping track of physiological phenomena for half a century he is at last of great value to his patients just at the time when he is scornfully dismissed for being too old to keep up appearances. The manufacturer who dismisses an old hand because his fingers are no longer supple loses sight of the recklessness so often inherent in youthful fingers, and he also forgets the profit he has made for so many years from the work of the same fingers.

Miss Wilkins' shoe manufacturer has no modern notions of the responsibilities of an employer to his men. He regards them as machines and when one gets a little worn he is discarded as if he were a thing of cogs, bars and straps. There is no mutualness or reciprocity in his relations with his employes. He considers that his obligations are entirely discharged by the wages. In the young man, his nephew, the lover of the story, there is a dawning consciousness of responsibility, of something besides services and wages. The heroine is a New England girl with the usual conviction that if she does her duty and repels all forms of

temptation, the world is certain to be better perceptibly. But even this small touch of levity is unworthy Miss Wilkins' heroine, who is a sublimated maiden; beautiful in body and soul and with the extra fine independence of the New England workman's child. The account of the moment when the daughter discovers that her father has lost his job and has been the rounds of the other manufacturers and cannot get another on account of his age, and that he has also lost his bank savings speculating in mines, is drawn with splendid dramatic power.

Mr. Howells asseverates that Americans are over-fond of dramatic scenes and that true novelists, like himself and Mr. Henry James, no longer select newspaper moments for description, although it is admitted that they are more interesting. Miss Wilkins has not lost her liking for crises and scenes and may it be a long day before she does. Mr. James has a strictly psychological tragedy in the same number of Harper's that for futility, mystery and far removal from anything of interest to his countrymen in America and to the moment is in striking contrast with Miss Wilkins' story.

#### The Solitude Cure.

Doctor Dedrick of the Peary Relief Expedition preferred to be put ashore at Etah, an Eskimo village of one ice hut, rather than return in the steamer in company he detested to the United States, warmth, comfort and family. The officers of the ship report that Doctor Dedrick took his gun and went ashore saying that he was going to hunt. When the steamer was about to start, the Doctor told those who came ashore for him that he was going to stay all winter and that they could not get him on the boat again except by main force. As he was well armed and appeared to be desperate they thought best to let him alone.

This is only an extreme instance of what often happens in expeditions. The human animal is gregarious, but when a number of men are confined in a ship for months it is likely that one or more not entirely devoted to the object of the expedition will be willing to adopt any expedient, short of murder or suicide, to rid himself of his shipmates. Small companies of friends frequently go on hunting, camping or sightseeing expeditions; they start hilariously with every demonstration of abiding friendliness and trust. When they return some members of the party believe that their eyes have been opened and they never resume the relations which may have continued unbroken for years before they were confined to each other's company for a term of months, weeks or days. The most restoring tonic to the nerves is solitude, more medicinal than mountains, ocean or springs, solitude is a cure which nearly every one can try. With several thousand nerves more delicately adjusted than the strings and stops of the finest instrument, we are played upon by ignorant performers, for long intervals without tuning. People who have been played till every note flats plan an expedition for rest and tuning in company with other instruments badly out of repair. They return tired and misanthropic but still unconscious of the tonic power of solitude, and the risks of constant association with a group. There have been a few monks who devote to religion or science who could seclude themselves and see with equanimity the same individuals day after day. But the monks had cells in which it was their duty and priv-