

**ALFRED THE GREAT;
OR, THE PATRIOT KING:
A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649408108

Alfred the Great; or, The Patriot King: A Drama in Five Acts by J. S. Knowles

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

English.

Elswith, Miss Huddard.
Maude, Mrs. C. Jones.
Alfred, Mr. Macready.
Oddone, Mr. J. Vining.
Oswith, Mr. H. Wallack.
Edric, Mr. Younge.
Egbert, Mr. Thompson.
Kenric, Mr. Cooke.

Edwy, Mr. Sinclair.
Oswald, Mr. Honner.
Arthur, Mr. Eaton.
Edgar, Mr. Bland.
Edwin, Mr. Fenton.
Conrad, Mr. Hammerton.
Ethelred, Miss Swift.
Arnold, Mr. Cathie.

Dances.

Ina, Miss Phillips.
Edith, Miss Faurit.
Guthrum, Mr. Cooper.
Amund, Mr. S. Jones.
Oscar, Mr. C. Jones.

Haldane, Mr. Howard.
Otho, Mr. Yarnold.
Soldier, Mr. Howell.
Priest, Mr. Dowsing.
Boy, Master Fenton.

PROLOGUE.

BY THOMAS ATKINSON.

To paint the manners, living as they rise;
To wing the folly as it soaring flies;
These have been deemed the Drama's fittest tasks:
Yet, does the Drama either? each one asks.
—The moment's manners, like the rainbow's hue,
Confusedly brilliant, are as fleeting too:
The shafts now aimed at folly seldom hit,
Fledged from its feathers, but untipped with wit.
Whatever is in Fashion, Art, or Science,
With our self-love 'gainst satire makes alliance!
These aim not at your Author,—his have been
The *sympathetic* triumphs of the scene.
When by a daughter's martyrdom made free,
You saw a nation leap to liberty.
And thought of Sydney's scaffold—Russell's wife—
When Gracchus gave to Roman ire his life;
Felt in your hearts a Wallace' spirit swell,
And knew your mountains have had many a Tell!
—But now his muse alights on English ground,
In England's annals has its story found:
A worthier page Time's records may not show;
And now the hand that bade your beacons glow
With mutual ardour, in the lofty pride
Of Freedom won—though by tyrannicide—
Doth picture forth a still more noble thing
Than patriot only—even a PATRIOT KING!—
Such as we now in living lustre see,
As WILLIAM wills each subject shall be FREE.
Not in the measured pomp of sounding verse,
Whose music's march moves like a monarch's hearse,
Seeks he to do it. Life's a chequered scene,
And its most vivid pictures such have been:
So he hath courted music's 'witching aid;—
It soothed the Dane,—are you more rudely made?
And oh, forget not, 'mid the sterner throng
Of Alfred's glories, he was child of song!—
This is his case;—his advocate's his theme;
And as your beacons warm at Alfred's name,
Be merciful in judgment, even while just—
For Alfred gave the Jury's sacred trust!

Alfred Howard

ALFRED.

ACT I.

SCENE FIRST.

THE DANISH CAMP.

Enter EDITH, with a bow and quiver, followed by INA, attended by a Boy, who carries a bow and quiver.

Edith. Come, let us see who'll hit the target first.

Ina. My bow hath got a cast, and will not shoot.

Edith. In sooth, your bow hath got no cast at all,—
'Tis straight as mine—take mine—I'll shoot with it.

Ina. Yours fits me not,—'tis harder far to draw.

Edith. Try it.

Ina. No, no; I will not shoot to-day.

Besides, my arrows all have lost the nock.

Edith. Here's store enough of mine.

Ina. Good Edith, no;

Entreat me not—I will not shoot to-day.

Edith. Why, so 'twas yesterday; fie, Ina, fie!
To tax thy bow with fault it never had.
The bow that hath a cast is thy chang'd will,
Thy nockless shafts are marr'd alone by that.

You woult to love this sport; from morn till night
Your pastime 'twas, and now you love it not.
What love you, sweet, instead?

Ina. What should I love?

Edith. Nay, Ina,—you alone can answer that.
Has Otho's suit prevailed?

Ina. When did a flower

Spring from a weed, that love should come of hate!

Edith. What! call you love a flower? A flower looks
gay—

So looks not love! A flower is sweet—who says
That love is sweet? Doth sweetness gather pain
For them that own it? Rather love's a weed
Oft taken for a flower—found out at last
With a sigh!—O, Ina, you have pluck'd this weed!
Come, own it, Ina!

Ina. Wherefore do you look
Thus at me?

Edith. Why do you, my Ina, look
At any thing but me? Why do your eyes
Of late their lustre lavish on the ground
That cares not for it?—and your honied breath
That should be given to your silver tongue
To make rich music of, why do you waste
Oftener on thankless and contentless sighs?
Come, tell me, Ina, what has happen'd to you?

Ina. Alas! I know not.

Edith. Do you say, Alas!
O, then 'tis over with you! Why, you're in tears;
Only the drop's but half-way out, that soon
Would make way for the rest,—held not your eye
Its crystal door upon it! Lean your head
Upon the bosom of your friend, and give
Your secret vent—for sure you have one, Ina?

Ina. Not I!—Come, take the bow!—I'll shoot with
you!—

My quiver 'gainst a shaft, I'll be the first
To hit the mark.—Set up the target, Boy!

[Exit Boy.]

Now for the eye of the eye.—In sooth I've missed
Wide by a mile—but thou hast shot full home!
I've pluck'd it, Edith, flower or weed.—If weed,
A weed most like a flower.—O precious weed!
There's not a flower so fair, I'd deem thee grac'd
To call thee by its name!

Boy, (running in.)

Boy. The battle's won!

I see our troops come winding up the glen,
Their spears and banners wreath'd,—a token sure
Of victory!

[Exit.

Edith. Let's meet them, Ina;—Come!

Why, sweet, what's this? How pale you turn! How
damp's

Your little hand! Nay, now, 'tis snow indeed.
Cold as 'tis white! Did you not rightly hear?
He says the battle's won!

Ina. I know he does.

Edith. Is't with such cheeks you listen to such news?
This would become the daughter of the foe.

Ina. The foe! The foe!

Edith. What! find'st thou something sweet
In that harsh word, that thou repeat'st it thus?

Ina. Harsh word! now, thou art harsh to call it so.—
Jars it thine ear? there's music in't to mine.—
Stands it for what thoud'st shun? that's what I'd seek:
Yea! 'fore the things that brother, sister, friend—
Soft names—do stand for! When thoud'st name to Ina
The thought most tender to her, use no word
But that—that harsh, sweet word—more sweet, because
'Tis harsh to all but her! She loves a foe!
That foe hath lost the battle we have won.

Edith. Why, sweet, where saw'st thou this gentle foe?

Ina. Even here. When last the Saxon ask'd a truce,
Curious to see their herald, I remain'd
Behind you in my father's tent. He came!
O, with what grace of richest manhood! Proud
His gait, yet bearing onwards looks so bland
As made all hearts give willing way to him.
He spake, and I took root to where I stood,
And so did all.—Not Guthrum mov'd.—O Edith!
How should it be with Ina? Where were her eyes?
What were her eyes about? What did her heart?
Dost feel it throbbing now? 'Tis quiet now
To what 'twas then! How often have you tried
To fix your naked eye upon the sun,
And when you've ta'en it off, how has the day,
From gazing his bright face, been turn'd to night,—
Flowers, verdure, darken'd; yea, the sky itself
From shining blue, grown ink—so was't with me
When sight of him was gone! Night turn'd to day
Again with you—but light's gone out with Ina
E'er since the day she look'd upon the foe!

Edith. Come hence, come hence awhile; your father's
here,
He must find looks of welcome—not such looks
As these!

Ina. Have with you.—You have got my secret!

[*Exeunt.*]

*Enter GUTHRUM, AMUND, OSCAR, HALDANE, and
Danes.*

Guthrum. Halt, comrades, halt! and change your
toil for rest,
And then from rest to feasting! We'll carouse
A moon for this last victory, that leaves
No future foe to front us. England's won:
We shall not need to cross the main again