

**KING  
ALFRED'S JEWEL**

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King Alfred's Jewel by Katrina Trask

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*"The same God, Who meeth all things . . .  
Knits together in a love most fond  
Unending wedlock."*

—POEMS OF KING ALFRED THE GREAT  
(Jubilee Edition), p. 198.



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**KING ALFRED'S  
:: JEWEL ::**

BY

**KATRINA TRASK**

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## INTRODUCTION

65-10-58

"Seeing that so many uncritical statements on the subject of King Alfred are abroad, it is all the more imperative that we begin our work with a critical survey of the materials at our disposal. We shall find them in many respects disappointingly scanty and incomplete.

". . . The first place in our list of authorities for the life of Alfred must be given to his own literary works. It is true that the evidence they furnish is mostly indirect, but it is for that very reason all the more secure."

—CHARLES PLUMMER, M.A., *The Life and Times of Alfred the Great.*

HE who would find King Alfred through the mist of the centuries knows the force, the truth of these words.

One searches the Saxon Chronicles ; they are as bare as bones. One searches the pages of Asser, and they contain a heavy coat, of divers threads monk-woven, that hides the Man. One turns to Alfred's transla-

tions of Boethius, Orosius, Bede, St. Gregory's "Pastoral Care," and "The Blossom Gatherings" from St. Augustine, and there one meets the living Alfred, throbbing with eternal life—alive in every personal word interwoven between the lines of the text he translated that he might pass on to his people the "bloom" which he had gathered.

With simple directness "Alfred The-Truth-Teller" reveals himself. First, by the varying subjects which he chooses to translate: History, Travel, Philosophy, Law, Ecclesiastical Literature and Pagan Story, the Church's Legends, and the Ballad of the simple folk; then, by the manner of his translation; but most of all, in his own words which shine out from the text. One apprehends the motive-springs that moved him; one feels the concentration and the many-sidedness, the ambition and the aspiration of this sovereign spirit.

Scholar, Statesman, Poet, Author, Law-giver, Churchman—but in all and through all, a Man. Not a visionary Saint, not a sexless Monk, but a Man of natural body and of quickening spirit met together ; a Man of three-fold nature commingled, as Alfred himself portrayed a Man in these words :—

“ I said that the soul was three-fold because philosophers affirm that it hath three natures. One of these natures is subject to desire ; the second, subject to passion ; and the third, that it is rational. . . . Reason must control both desire and passion, for it is a special virtue of the soul. . . .

“ Thou, O Lord, bringest together heavenly souls and earthly bodies, and minglest them in this world.”