

**ALFRED: A  
PATRIOTIC  
PLAY, IN FIVE ACTS**

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Alfred: A Patriotic Play, in Five Acts by Martin F. Tupper

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**MARTIN F. TUPPER**

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PATRIOTIC  
PLAY, IN FIVE ACTS**



# ALFRED.

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A PATRIOTIC PLAY,

In Five Acts.

BY

MARTIN F. TUPPER,

*Author of "Proverbial Philosophy," &c.*

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1858.

## PERSONS.

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KING ALFRED.  
ELSWITHA, *his Queen.*  
BERTHA, *his Sister.*  
EDWARD and ETHELWARD, *Boy Princes.*  
GUTHROM, *the Danish Viking.*  
ETHELNOTH, *Headman of Somersets.*  
HEREWARD, *Headman of Wilts.*  
WULF, *a boorish Celtic Neatherd..*  
EGGA, *his old vixen Wife.*  
SIDROC, *a Danish Jarl.*  
THE CHIEF SKALD.  
ENGLISH LORDS.  
A GAOLER.  
DANISH AND BRITISH SOLDIERS, &c.



Scenes laid in Wilts and Somersets: at Chippenham, Ethandune,  
Atholney, and Glastonbury.

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Dresses, Arms, Standards, Appointments, and Architecture of  
the Period. Incidents, chiefly historical.

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Time of Action a few days: including the 23rd of March, 878: the  
victory of Ethandune having been gained on  
Easter Day in that year.

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The Overture to be exclusively English and national music: to  
commence with wailing Welsh or old British tunes, then to swell  
into marches and military Bardism,—thereafter to change gradually  
into other recognised national airs; a well wrought cento of tunes,  
including (for example) "The Bay of Biscay," "Rule Britannia,"  
and so forth, ending with "God save the Queen." The like music  
between the Acts.

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# A C T I.

## SCENE I.

*A desolate heath near Chippenham Castle,—the wind sighing, and the roar of battle in the distance: a long pause: then a rout of flying English and pursuing Danes in the back of the stage; with afterwards a wounded white horse, royally caparisoned, and rideless, galloping across. After this a lull: and then hurriedly from opposite points, back and front, ETHELNOTH and HEReward run in, with mace and sword, bloody.*

HEReward (*eagerly*).

Where's the King?—where's the King?—

ETHELNOTH.

Alas! alas!

I much do fear me dead: his milkwhite charger,  
Ever the very focus of the fight,  
Fell with him o'er a heap of dead and dying,  
And, madden'd by the arrows, broke away  
Leaving the King afoot. I saw him stand  
Surrounded by a jackal pack of Danes,  
The very lion at bay; they crowded on,  
But still he slew and slew, heaps upon heaps;  
I strove to reach him, but could not get nigh;



For, wielding his red mace like Thor himself  
 Stoutly he cleft a narrow bloody lane  
 Right through their opposite host,—and then, as if  
 Fell'd by some coward catiffs from behind,  
 I lost his gold-sphered head !

HEREWARD.

Woe worth the day !  
 With Alfred's death, what hope for England's life ?

ETHELNOTH (*despondingly*).

What hope :—for Alfred is the soul of England  
 Of free, brave, honourable, religious England,—  
 That doth with an indomitable will  
 What Duty hath determined shall be done :  
 And, with him dead, alas, for England dead !  
 Seeing the days are evil, and her sons  
 Through mammon-worship and the selfishness  
 Of peace and quietness at any price  
 Are thus degenerate from old country love.  
 Why, friend,—our magnates, baser than their names,  
 To save their rank, and still upon the poor  
 To trample with a rich man's cruel heel,  
 All, save our gallant few in Somerset,  
 Have covertly gone over to the Dane,  
 Worship his Raven, call this Guthrom king,  
 And, in their quaking crafty avarice  
 Pretending peace with all men, brotherhood,  
 And universal love,—that poppy milk  
 Of poisoned human kindness,—have deserted  
 Alfred to fight for England all alone !

HEREWARD.

Alone ?—nay, Ethelnoth,—for some stand with him.

ETHELNOTH.

We will not boast ourselves, good Hereward,

But of the nobler and the richer sort  
 All else have been corrupted by the Dane,  
 Flattered,—or frightened at his pirate fist  
 Clutching their moneybags,—thus to stand back  
 And leave our English Alfred all alone!

HERREWARD.

Alone?—yet are there millions with the King:  
 O Sir, the country's heart, the country's strength,  
 Her thews and muscles all are with the King,—  
 The People are for England and the King,—  
 And God with us,—then say not thou alone!

ETHELNOTH.

My noble friend, forgive,—and Heaven forgive  
 That false and feeble word of fear, alone:  
 O wise and good rebuke!—my vision clears,—  
 Alone? I see so many now with us,  
 All that is honest, earnest, brave in England,  
 And God Himself on our side for the right,  
 That none but perishable evil things  
 Would seem to be against us. Yet, ah! dread  
 Unspeakable, O ruin past repair,  
 If English Alfred with his battleaxe  
 Hath hewed him out only a grave,—

[WOLF *the neatherd runs in, ridiculously frightened.*

—Stand back!—

Speak, sirrah,—leave thy gaping.

WOLF.

Mighty captains,  
 How went the battle down in Wilts? which won,  
 Saxon or Dane? there's plenty o' both about,  
 Axemen and pikemen, sword and mace and bowmen,  
 I'm so afeard at all o' them,—which side won?

HERREWARD.

Art thou for Alfred, churl?

WOLF.

Nay, mighty captain,  
Art thou for Alfred? I'm—for—you, great captains,—  
Is then the Saxon or the Dane my lord?

ETHELNOTH.

Alfred is lord and king above thee, churl.

WOLF.

Just what yon archer told me,—to the word:  
A wounded dusty relic of the fight  
Now biding at my hovel: when I asked  
Which side had won, and who was lord and king,—  
He quoth, quoth he,—

ETHELNOTH.

Stop, sirrah: lead us straight  
To see this archer; he may bring perchance  
Some tidings of the king: we'll to thy hovel.

*{they go out.}*

## SCENE II.

*The neatherd's hut. EGGA, the housewife, comes in, and busies herself about kneading dough, going first up to ALFRED, who, disguised as an archer, mends his broken bow beside a hearth.*

EGGA (*angrily*).

Nay now, young man, but I heard thee smouthing and araving and tongue-clapping lustily; and all about England's woes forsooth! Why, ye'll scare my fowls: and there's the old grey hen sitting on thirteen eggs to hatch come Woden's-day: a plague on thy thriftless clamouring!

ALFRED,

*(looking up, and feeling the point of an arrow.)*

Dame, I will hold my peace.