JUVENILE COLUMN. WITHOUT A BLEMISH.

WITHOUT A BLEMISH.

(Gleveland, Ohio, Catholic Universe)

(Marian, do you suppose any one lives who has not an imperfection; and is not that imperfection a blemish?

(No one is absolutely perfect, Alfred; and even if we were so happy as to have but one imperfection, if this imperfection is not well taken care of, it becomes an actual blemish. But why do you ask such a serious question?

(I took the Life of King Alfred, from the library this week, thinking I should like to know something about all the great Alfreds in the world. The first thing I came across in the preface, was, that 'Alfred'scharacter was without a blemish.'"

"And you, Alfred, perverse follow that

"And you, Alfred, perverse follow that you are, immediately concluded that Alfred had a blemish ?"

a plemen ?"
Yes, sister, just like every other morunless sanctified, like St. John the Bapbefore his birth."

"Yes, sister, just like every other mortal; unless sanctified, like St. John the Baptist, before his birth."

"It is one thing to have an imperfection or even a blemish, and another to keep that imperfection. If I have read history aright; (and one who reads Lingard's his tory is pretty sure to do so), Alfred had not only one imperfection, but several. Like many sons of good mothers, Alfred was a good boy and a good youth; and when he first took his seat on the throne of England he was as good a king as one so young knows how to be. But after a while, the holy lessons of his mother, Osburga, were forgotten by Alfred in the excitement of a court life. I suppose he was flattered like all kings, like all persons in high places, and he became selfish. He was selfish in desiring riches for himself rather than prosperity for his people. He was selfish in desiring riches for himself rather than prosperity for his courtiers."

"This is not a very pleasing picture of my Alfred the Great, Marian! I was willing to have you tell me of some small imperfection, but I do not care about having all the romance stripped from my hero."

"Ah, this is the way the world talks, Alfred! But let us see what happened. Alfred was sitting quite at his ease on his throne of Wessex. What had he to fear? He weuld have laughed if any one had warned him of coming danger. He did laugh, no doubt when his holy kinsman, St. Neot, reproved him for his selfschness, so unworthy of a Christian king. But, for all that the comment of the search of the selfschness, so unworthy of a Christian king.

laugh, no doubt when his holy kinaman, St. Neot, reproved him for his selfishness, as unworthy of a Christian king. But, for all that, the storm came. Gothrun, one of the Danish chiefa who had been driven from Alfred's dominions, kept a keen watch up on the young king. On the very first day of the year 678, Gothrun sent to all his veterans to meet him, on horseback, at a certain place. On the 6th of January, the Feast of the Epiphany, the pagan Gothrun was in presession of Chippenham, the villa of the Christian king Alfred, on the left bank of the river Avon. It is supposed that Alfred was actually at Chippenham when the alarm was given, but managed to escape without falling into the hands of the enemy. But wherever he was hidden, the enemy. But wherever he was hidden he saw himself surrounded by heathen bar barians and almost without attendants."

"Not a very pleasant position for my Affred the Great."

"Not very pleasant, but exactly the one to give our selfish young king a chance to think about the life he had been leading. This is one of the bleasings of a good Christian training in one's youth. He had forgotten the precepts of his plons mother, Queen Osburga, while aitting securely on his throne. But when he found himself a wanderer, hiding from a pagan enemy, he remembered, with shame, the selfishness of his prosperity, and acknowledged, as any Christian would, that he had brought all these woes upon himself. Instead of doing rash things, as he was inclined to do at first. these wees upon himself. Instead of doing rash things, as he was inclined to do at first, he listened humbly to his old thanes or lords. Finally, he dismissed them althgether from attending upon him; and, alone and on foot, found an island in the midst of a moraes in Somersetshire. It was to this island afterwards called Ethelingey, or Prince's Island, that all who remained faithful to Alfred at last found their way. During this retreat, alone and on foot, in a plainand afterwards called Ethelingey, or Prince's Island, that all who remained faithful to Alfred at last found their way. During this retreat, alone and on foot, in a miserable island in the midst of a swamp, our young king was obliged to pass himself off for one of those poor people whom he had despised. One day, towards evening, he came to the cottage, or hut, of a swine herd. Hungry and weary, he asked for food and a night's lodging of the mistress of the hut. He was allowed to come in; and perhaps something in the voice or look, or manner, of the hungry stranger, touched her womanly heart. But, then, everybody must be useful; and as he sat by the blazing logs in the chimney corner, she bade him watch the cakes ahe was baking for supper in the ashes. The good peasant woman bustled about, and spread her table, and made a place for the stranger; but when she came to her cakes on the hearth they were burned! 'And this is the way, you worthless vagabond, that you watch the cakes or your any anner as hearth they were burned! 'And this is the way, you worthless vagabond, that you watch the cakes for your own supper as well as mine?' ecreamed the woman. Do you think our young king dared to fly into a grand passion and tell her who she was solding? No indeed; but picking up the cakes from the hot ashes as fast as he could, he set them on the table with such a good will to repair his mischief, that the woman forgave him. 'Never mind, my good youth, they might be worse; and perhaps you have not been used to minding hearthcakes. not been used to minding hearthcakes Sit down and satisfy your hunger.' You see, our young king was growing wise By the time he had lived on his island long By the time he had lived on his island long enough to be well punished for all his wrong doing, his thanes were ready to join him. Odun, one of his bravest lords, won a great victory; actually captured the mysterious stanard of the Raven or Reafant's actually captured the mysterious stanard of the Raven or Reafant's actually captured the mysterious stanard of the Raven or Reafant's actually captured the mysterious stanard of the Raven or Reafant's actually captured the mysterious stanard of the Raven or Reafant's captured the mysterious stanard of the Raven or Reafant's captured them. A full stock and the stanard that the mysterious stanard the mysterious actually captured the mysterious actually captured the mysterious actually captured them. A full stock and the mysterious actually captured them. A fu

fan?"

"But why was it called mysterious?"

"The Danes said that it was woven, in one noontide, by the three daughters of Ragnar. They always watched the bird or raven on the standard, when they went to battle. If it seemed to flap its wings, they expected victory, but if it hung motionless in the air they were sure of defeat."

"And Odun captured their Raven?"

"Yes, and from this time the Anglo Saxous took heart. Guthrun himself fell into the hands of Alfred, A few weeks after Alfred was restored to his throne, he stood aponsor for Gothrun, who, from the time of his baptism, kept his word with Alfred, as a Christian abould."

"And Alfred kept his word with Goth-

but with all his own people and with God binuself. From that time, we may indeed say that the character of Alfred was without a blemish."

"I like the ending of the story—"

"The History, if you please, Alfred!,"

"I like the ending of the history, then, Marian. I am half inclined to think it is better to tell things just as they are, than to try to gloss them over, and call our heroes perfect when they are not, I should have been very much pleased to have heard that Alfred was always great, though not quite perfect; but there is one good thing about our Church, Marian, now, as well as in king Alfred's time, repentence is counted a virtue."

"Yes, Alfred the next best to innocence."

"Yes. Alfred the next best to innocence."

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"And Alfred kept his word with Gothrun, I hope, Marian."

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