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## SAINT MARGARET, QUEEN OF SCOTLAND.\*

### THE FIRST ROYAL BRITISH NURSE.

We can give but a short summary of the lecture on the talented royal lady shipwrecked on the coast of Scotland nearly nine centuries ago, who was destined to exercise a great and far-reaching influence on the civilisation of that country. To understand something of the personality of Queen Margaret it is necessary to refer to her parentage. Her grandfather, Edmund Ironside, had, with great strength of purpose and tenacity, used all his power to oppose the Danish effort to conquer England, but was at last defeated. His sons were sent to the King of Sweden, with the understanding that they would be destroyed; but the Swedish King sent the young Princes to the Court of Stephen of Hungary, a saintly monarch who did much to foster learning in his kingdom. The elder of the young Princes died early, but Edward grew up and married the gifted Princess Agatha, a kinswoman of the German Emperor. Their children were Edgar, Christina and Margaret, afterwards Queen of Scotland. When Edward was forty-nine, he, with his Queen and children, came to the Court of Edward the Confessor, but, soon after this, his death occurred, and Princess Agatha found it expedient to leave the English Court. The ship in which she and her children sailed for the Continent was wrecked in the Firth of Forth. News was taken to Malcolm, King of the Scots, in his tower of Dunfermline, that a ship was battling against the storm in the Firth, and later came further news that a beautiful lady of "jocund" speech had been shipwrecked. Malcolm had the party brought to his tower, and the bay where they landed is still spoken of as St. Margaret's Hope; between it and Dunfermline lies St. Margaret's Stone Farm, so called because she is supposed to have rested on a great stone on its lands; another legend tells that on this stone she sat and delivered judgment to the people, a duty which Malcolm appears to have frequently entrusted to her.

Little is known of the courtship of the Celtic King, Malcolm Canmore (Malcolm of the great head) and his Saxon Princess, but it seems fairly evident that the latter showed a certain reluctance to the marriage, which, however, took place in 1069; her firm desire had been to enter a convent, but, apart from this, it must have caused the gentle Princess a good deal of reflection before she decided to share with Malcolm the blood-stained throne of Scotland; the king himself is credited with little learning although he was courageous and indeed an unusually able statesman for his time. Despite the fact that they must have been an ill-assorted couple the marriage was, in all respects, a happy one. Margaret was never able to dissuade her husband from undertaking war-like expeditions either into his own territories or those of England, but there is every evidence that he revered and loved his wife, and she,

beautiful, cultured and gentle, was an object almost of worship to her subjects and to her sons and daughters.

Turgot, her Chaplain and Biographer, has much to say of Margaret's piety, and she showed a statesmanlike mind and a fine understanding too of the dignity of the Throne and of the need for a reflection of its dignity in suitable pageantry and splendour. She herself, as an act of duty to her Queenship, wore beautiful dresses, always praying to be reminded that only a heap of dust walked beneath her elegant garments. She was the first person in Scotland to recognise and insist upon the dignity and independence of women, and she introduced laws into the country which gave to them a protection then sadly needed. She was a great patron of the arts, and, herself an expert needlewoman, taught the ladies of her Court the art of the needle. Dunfermline claims that it owes to her the commencement of the great linen industry which has made that town one of the most prosperous in Scotland.

But it is with Margaret as a nurse that the present lecture is concerned. We have heard of several English Queens who have left their mark on nursing developments, and it is natural, when one looks for such a Queen in Scotland, that search should first be made into the records connected with Queen Margaret. Helena and the great Roman matrons of old built shelters for pilgrims and the sick on the way to the Holy City of Jerusalem; and in the wild, half-barbarous country of her adoption Margaret built hostels on the way to the City of Dunfermline with its Church of the Holy Trinity which she and Malcolm had built. It is said that she cared for the suffering and those wounded in battle, and that they ascribed the healing she brought to them as due more to her touch than to the ointment she used. A story is told of a grief-stricken mother whose child was suffering from plague; no one would venture near the cottage, but the Queen brought medicine and food from her tower of Dunfermline, fed, soothed and cared for the sick child with her own hands.

Margaret has much in common with a great woman of the Middle Ages who lived later than she—St. Elizabeth of Hungary—but in some respects Margaret might be regarded as the greater character; she lived at a time when civilisation was even less advanced, and she gave evidence of scholarship, statesmanship and a knowledge of the arts which singled her out as a woman endowed with gifts and faculties far beyond her time. One story told of her is very similar to another recounted of St. Elizabeth. Once, on the way through the glen under the walls of her palace, Margaret was met by King Malcolm and his courtiers; she was carrying in her arms stores of medicine or food for the poor in Dunfermline, and with a humility characteristic of her, she tried to hide her gifts by drawing her cloak around her; he, wishing to show his courtiers something of the goodness of their Queen, drew aside the folds of her cloak and there lay in her arms neither bread nor medicine, but beautiful woodland flowers.

Queen Margaret was the first Infant Welfare Nurse whom we can trace in our history; she made herself responsible

\* A Lecture given by Miss Isabel Macdonald, F.B.C.N., Secretary of the Royal British Nurses' Association, at 194, Queen's Gate, S.W., on April 21st, 1928.

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