

ROYAL NURSES.

BY ISABEL MACDONALD.

The Dear Saint Elizabeth, Princess of Thuringia.
1207-1231.

(Concluded from page 235.)

Most of the miracles connected with Elizabeth relate to her work among the sick and the poor; those miracles are numerous in the story of her life subsequent to her husband's death, but (before this happened) two in particular have helped to retain the love which envelops the memory of her in Thuringia. The best known is that of "the dear Saint" and her roses. Coming down the mountain side one day and carrying under her cloak bread "for God's friends and hers" (*i.e.*, the poor) she met her husband at the head of his retinue. He asked her what she carried, and she modestly tried to evade a reply. But Duke Louis was of a mind just then to show to his courtiers something of the goodness of his beautiful Hungarian Princess. He gently pulled aside the folds of her cloak, when behold, masses of crimson roses lay in the arms of Elizabeth where the bread had been. On another occasion the Langravine Sophia was infuriated when she discovered that Elizabeth had put a leper in her son's bed. She immediately found Louis and led him up to show to him the terribly inconsiderate acts of which his wife was guilty. Duke Louis pulled down the coverlet and where the leper had had been there lay the figure of the Crucified One. Turning to his mother he said that he hoped that many times his Elizabeth would bring to his bed such "a sweet guest."

The first of Elizabeth's four children was born when she was sixteen. We might refer to those children just shortly. Hermann, the elder, became heir to his father's vast territory and grew up a worthy son of such parents, but, unfortunately, his end was an untimely one. Sophia, the eldest daughter, was affianced in childhood to the Duke of Brabant, and it is through the descendants of this Sophia that almost every

Royal House in Europe has in it the blood stream of the Princess Elizabeth. Her second daughter, also named Sophia, took the veil and ultimately became Abbess of Kitzingen. The youngest child, Gertrude, born after the death of Louis, is of special interest to us. In fulfilment of a vow made by her husband and herself just before he started on his Crusade, Elizabeth carried barefoot this baby daughter to the Convent of Aldenburg, where she was to remain for her life; she became its Abbess at last and governed it with great ability for forty-nine years. What is

so very interesting is that, in this very building, nearly six hundred years after, was born Friedrike Fliedner (*née* Munster). Who shall say that the great work achieved by the latter in the evolution of nursing did not owe some, at least, of its inspiration to the associations of her childhood's home with one of the greatest of the saints of the middle ages? How often indeed must Elizabeth's thoughts have travelled there with tears, when she thought of the baby she had handed into the keeping of the nuns. This Gertrude collected certain relics of her mother. Among them are a chasuble made from a robe of the Princess, a silver gilt cup wherewith she served the poor in her hospital with drink, her wedding ring and other things which are now in the castle at Braunfels.

Just before the birth of Gertrude sorrow came into the life of Elizabeth. Her husband had joined the Crusaders, but decided to keep this a secret until after the child was born. One evening, her money for almsgiving having become exhausted, Elizabeth playfully unloosed her husband's belt and took from it the almspurse attached to it. Instead of money she drew from it the cross of a Crusader and, seized with grief and fear, fell senseless at his feet. Her husband comforted her and they talked long of many things, among them the destiny of the baby that would come so soon; if it were a boy he should become a monk, if a girl then she would enter the convent at Aldenburg near Wetzlar. Then the Duke, having no longer need to keep his secret, made it known to all. He addressed an assembly of his nobles on the subject of how his people should be governed in his absence, visited many religious houses



THE HOLY ELIZABETH.
Fifteenth Century figure, carved in wood, in the Church of
St. Elizabeth at Marburg.

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