

ROYAL NURSES.

QUEEN MARGARET: THE PEARL OF SCOTLAND.

If, in retrospective mood, we view the panorama of Scottish history, we can hardly arrive at the conclusion that this is one of the countries that has experienced much of that "blessedness" which is said to lie in "making no history." On the contrary there have been storms and turbulence enough, something too of that cunning and treachery which so often plays a part in the early evolution of a civilisation. Yet, preserved in song and story, such aspects serve but as the shadows that cause the highlights of courage and loyalty to shine the more brightly. Many a lost cause has attained, in the perspective of time, to a kind of eternal, actually a spiritual, victory, for thereby has been lifted high, as our glance takes in the ages, the flaming courage of men who, with their dead hopes, have slept for long beneath the heather, forgotten as individuals, unknown and nameless now, save in the patronymics of their clans. In the vision of a slow development of civilisation, with its tribal and civil wars, its periods of patient endeavour, of devastating religious strife, of prosperity or of poverty, there stands, in the mist of distant years, one of those rare personalities who appear, when viewed, in the conditions of their age, as "born out of due time"—born before their time. Paul was not the only one, there have been many such and, indeed, always must be if there is to be advancement. People there are who bring their message and their inspiration forward, people who see their ideals, see them as archetypes of what should be established for the future, and they set out, careless of opposition and difficulty, on the road to the realisation of their ideals; they sow, others reap. Well, among reformers we can certainly place Margaret of Scotland, Queen of Malcolm Canmore, Malcolm the great head or chief, son of the kindly Duncan of Shakespeare's Macbeth. In her were harmonised great qualities of character and mind, and a study of her life, from the information that has drifted down the centuries, leaves us with the impression that what Malcolm's Queen has contributed to the story of Scotland is still among the most exquisite of that nation's memories, set, as it is too, in times of bloodshed and turbulence, when law lay practically only at the dagger's point. *I would have you always keep in mind the conditions of Queen Margaret's time, the framework in which she is set, so to speak.* To quote the Douay Chronicle in its quaint, old-time phraseology and spelling "She was the idea of a parfait Queen,* one of those wise ones who, by the sweetness of her conversation, the innocence of her deportment and the force of her spirit reformed the abuses that had crept into the kingdom." She stands at the dawn of a new age in the growth of that northern civilisation; almost we might regard her as the herald of that dawn.

Queen Margaret's father was the son of Edmund Ironside, who died in 1016; his successor dispatched the two young sons of Edmund to the court of the king of Sweden with the sinister advice to "rid himself of them without noise." But the Swedish King proved more tender-hearted and ultimately sent the two boys to the court of Stephen of Hungary, a wise and enlightened ruler. Thus the princes had the good fortune to receive their education and early training in what was probably the most cultured court in Europe. One of them, Edmund, died early, but the other, Edward, grew up and married Princess Agatha, of whom an old writer says "Nature had endowed her with all the qualities requisite to a comely person, a woman famed for the excellency of her mind and the holiness of her life." Edward and she had three children, Edgar, Christina and

Margaret; this last is the subject of my address. The old Chronicle of Douay comments upon the wisdom with which Agatha brought up her children and they were probably educated under the influence of the Benedictines.

In 1054 the Bishop of Worcester and the Abbot of Romsey, by command of Edward the Confessor, set out for the court of Henry II at Cologne, and asked him to send an embassy to Hungary requesting that Edward, with his Princess and their children, should come to England that he might take his place as heir to her crown. And so Edward, his Princess and children set out with, it is recorded, "a fair train of Hungarian Lords and Gentlemen." Alas, Edward died on reaching England but, until the death of the Confessor, Agatha and her children found a home at the English court; it is just possible that there they may have first met Malcolm of Scotland; he was sent to the court of England for safety after his father's death. Harold, son of a previous claimant to the English crown, became King on the death of the Confessor, and on Harold's death Edgar was chosen King but never crowned; indeed he was somewhat of a weak character this brother of Margaret, as is indicated by the fact that, on Christmas Day, 1066, along with many of his nobles and bishops, he did homage to William the Conqueror and virtually handed to the latter his crown. William had a faculty for collecting about him men of great intellect and it was probably at the English Court that Margaret first met Lanfranc, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, who exercised such an influence upon her life; he has referred to her as "the glorious Queen of the Scots"—no small tribute from the great Lanfranc.

To piece together fragment by fragment the story of the life and characteristics of a Queen who lived in Britain so long ago as the eleventh century would, inevitably, have proved an impossible task for modern historians but for an incident which occurred some short time subsequent to the death of Queen Margaret. Matilda, her daughter, wife of Henry I of England, felt that she knew too little of her saintly mother, having been brought up chiefly under the somewhat strict regime of her aunt Christina, Abbess of Romsey. Therefore she wrote to the Prior of Durham, one time confessor to Queen Margaret, asking him to set down what he remembered of her mother. Prior Turgot evidently approached his task with some degree of diffidence, torn by a desire to write a laudatory epistle on one whom he greatly revered and loved and anxiety lest his narrative should in any way outstrip the bounds of truth or give an impression that, to use his own words, he had "decked the crow in swan's feathers." And so, with dignified moderation, in his scholarly Latin prose, did the great Prior, afterwards Bishop of St. Andrews, bequeath to posterity the story of his Queen. His narrative bears the stamp of truth and legend has added its share to the legacy of the priest; nor, in the light of Turgot's record, need we say that the legends connected with the Queen make more of her virtues than he, in his meticulous truthfulness, would indicate to be possible. Moreover we must never discount the value of legend; there is often much truth in legend.

A note of romance runs through the whole story of the life of Margaret of Scotland, and that note is dominant in the episode of her arrival in her northern kingdom when she was probably about the age of twenty. It is not clear whether, when they set sail from England (because of the disturbed conditions there), Agatha and her children intended to flee to Hungary and were driven by the storm into the Firth of Forth, or whether they were actually making for Scotland to seek shelter there. Some historians claim that, during their voyage, they landed at Wearmouth, that Malcolm chanced to be there and promised them the protection of his towers.

* The word is probably to be taken in the sense of "ideal."

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