

The Chronicle of Melrose says that "Malcolm granted his peace to the Prince Edgar and his sisters Christina and Margaret, whom he found fleeing from the King of England." Be that as it may, the story goes of how there came to Malcolm one day, in his castle at Dunfermline, news that a ship was battling against the storm in the Firth of Forth and later other messengers brought the story of how a beautiful Princess, quaintly described as "of jocund speech" had been cast by the storm on the shores of his kingdom. Malcolm sent his courtiers to bring the shipwrecked party to his towers and, through this incident, it ultimately came about that the blood of the Celtic Kings and also the blood of the old English Kings entered into the stream of the descendants of the Conqueror. For the inevitable happened, Edgar, his mother and sisters were sheltered in Malcolm's Castle at Dunfermline\*

and to quote the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "King Malcolm began to yearn for Edgar's sister to wife." Little is known of the courtship of the Celtic King but it is plain that Margaret showed a certain reluctance to the marriage; she desired to enter a convent as many Royal ladies did in those days. Malcolm must have appeared to her little more than chief of a band of raiders; though something of a statesman he was rough, uncouth and could not read nor write. She, on the contrary, was full of the finest culture of her time and of splendid ancestry; she descended on her father's side from Alfred the Great, on her mother's from the Cæsars. We are told that

Malcolm "dealt with her brother until he said yea"; what could poor Edgar do otherwise, he was completely in Malcolm's power. Ultimately Malcolm and his Saxon Princess were married by the Bishop of St. Andrews (1067 or 1070) in the little church of Dunfermline and great were the feasting and celebrations which took place in and around the castle.

In an old chronicle there runs what might be regarded as the marriage notice of Malcolm and Margaret:—"Quine Margaret was married to King Malcolm, with grate solemnity at his village and castle of Dunfermline-in-the-Woodes

a place so strongly fortified that neither man nor beast may tread its trackless paths." They may appear to have been a somewhat ill-matched pair those two, but there is every evidence to show that the marriage was a singularly happy one, in spite of the fact that she never quite succeeded in weaning him from his warlike propensities. Malcolm was a great leader but—he was also a great lover. Turgot says "There was in the King a sort of dread of offending her, he obeyed her wise and prudent counsel in all things, whatever she refused he refused also, whatever pleased her he loved for love of her. He loved her books even although he could not read them and would have them bound with gold and set with gems. He loved to give them to her himself." Such is the testimony of the man who knew those two better than any other; who, to use

his own words "was acquainted for the most part with her secrets." And next to her husband Margaret had no greater admirers than her two daughters and six tall sons. Great and good men were those sons of Margaret, though one for a time departed from the paths of virtue. Margaret was a real psychologist in her views about the impressionable years of childhood. A 16th century writer says "that the Scots never had more excellent Kings than those born of English women, is clear from the example of the children of the blessed Queen Margaret, kings who never knew defeat and were in every way the best." We see the results of her wise training, especially in Matilda the Good and in her



ROYAL NURSES.

Queen Margaret reading to Malcolm Canmore from her Book of the Gospels. From a painting by Sir Noel Paton in the Town Hall of Dunfermline.

youngest son, the courtly David, the flower of her flock, whom James I described as "a sair saint for a croon"; he it was who built the church of Holyrood to contain his mother's famous Holy Rood or cross. To him also we owe abbeys like Melrose, Kelso and others that were the glory of Scotland in pre-Reformation times.

Queen Margaret was long held in reverence for her unworldliness and indeed her penances were carried somewhat to excess and undoubtedly shortened her life, a life valuable to humanity; but we have to bear in mind that, in those days, it was usual to mortify the body to an extent that few would dream of in our times; by so doing it was believed that a clearer vision of the spiritual was attained to. Almost you sense a certain fanaticism in her,

\* The Gaelic is Dun-fiar-linne and means "The Tower by the Crooked Burn."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)